

Writing for Strategic Media

JRSM 7422-S01

Fall 2023

M 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Zoom

Prof. Kim Marks Malone, APR, Fellow PRSA

Office: 334A Meeman Journalism Building

Office Hours: Monday, 1- 4 p.m.; Wednesday, 1- 4 p.m.; other hours by appointment

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog Description

Writing for all aspects of public relations and advertising, with a specific focus on writing for audio/visual and social media platforms, including translating one message across multiple technologies and platforms. Focus will be on writing in an active, engaging voice that aligns with the organization's mission and profile.

Prerequisites

Graduate status

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Handley, A. (2022). *Everybody writes: Your guide to creating ridiculously good content* (2nd edition). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley

ISBN 978-1-119-854166

Additional course readings will be available on Canvas.

Recommended

The Associated Press Stylebook 2022 (or earlier). New York: Basic Books

*You can also access The AP Stylebook as an online publication or through an app. Get details about these options online at apstylebook.com

Classroom format

This class is a Synchronous Class Format (S01) that meets at a scheduled time via Zoom. The link for the Zoom meeting is posted in Canvas. This is a graduate seminar with lecture and class discussions. Each week, we will discuss a new topic and I and/or designated classmates will be responsible for presenting the class with ideas for debate from the readings or examples from the field, and critically analyze the week's concepts. Please note that failure to attend class or to actively take part – even if all your assignments are turned in on time and done acceptably – will significantly affect your final grade. Be sure you have read the material BEFORE class and come prepared to discuss it.

You need to have video turned on during class. Let me know if this is going to be an issue for you.

You must have Microsoft Word software. I must be able to open your work to grade it. Work submitted in a software package not noted as acceptable in this syllabus (Microsoft Word) may result in point deductions being assessed to your work.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis Canvas login page: <https://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. On the Dashboard, click on the course card for JRSM 7422-S01.

Course Assignments and expectations

This is meant as a general guideline to the major assignments within the class. More detail will be provided in class and on Canvas. Deadlines are also listed in the class schedule. All work should be turned in as a Word document (unless otherwise noted) in Canvas by the deadline specified in the assignment. *This is by no means a complete list of all assignments that will be completed during the semester.*

Research colloquium. You must attend (virtually via Zoom or in-person) at least one Research Colloquium sponsored by the Department and write a one-page reflection paper about what you learned, take-aways, etc. If you cannot attend the colloquium “live” you will receive instructions about how to view the recording after the event. If you are enrolled in more than one course, you may write multiple reflections on one research presentation if the topic is customized to the individual class (i.e., you may not turn in the same reflection paper for multiple classes). You must submit your reflection NLT 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 6.

Discussant. You will each take the lead on a discussion for class one week. [You will sign up for your week in advance.](#) The discussant will write a two-page essay discussing the week's readings and post it to the discussion board by 11:59 p.m. on Friday before the scheduled class. You each will be required to read the discussant's essay in addition to the week's readings. During the class session, the discussant will take the lead on a 30- to 45-minute class discussion for their

topic(s). There are two discussants in Weeks 3 and 9. Each discussant will have a separate topic with readings associated with their topic.

Weekly “blog” discussion posts. You each will be asked to respond to the weekly readings in the form of a 250-word blog post. The idea is not to regurgitate the readings but to analyze them by providing insights and comments that demonstrate knowledge and deep thinking about theories, methods, and concepts found in the week’s assigned readings. You may make connections to readings from other weeks and/or connections to something you have read about or learned in popular media or another course. The intent is for you to interact with the material in such a way as to be prepared to discuss it in class, and to write out your thoughts on the ideas presented. The purpose of this assignment is also to help you develop your voice as a writer throughout the semester. The blog format is designed to allow you maximum flexibility in finding creative, engaging, and fun ways to synthesize the readings and develop killer content. You will be given a prompt each week to help guide the direction of your writing. Be sure to have your discussion post at hand during class to help remember your ideas and connections during the class discussion.

You will NOT be required to submit a discussion post the week that you are the discussion leader. Your presentation/questions will take the place of the discussion post grade.

Discussion posts will be graded on (1) content – post addresses all questions asked and is appropriate in length to stimulate further discussion (min. 250 words, no more than 300 words), clearly relates to the main topic and includes several supporting details and/or examples; (2) contribution – post is thoughtful, analytical and original; (3) connection – you make connections between course content, readings, and personal reflection, current events, etc.; (4) mechanics – post is well-structured, logical, free of grammatical and spelling errors.

HubSpot Academy Writing Course. As part of this class, you will be required to complete the free Writing Course with Bestselling Author Daniel Pink through HubSpot Academy. You can sign up for the free course here > <https://academy.hubspot.com/> The course consists of three lessons and should take approximately 90 minutes to complete. You’ll be required to upload a screenshot of your completion certificate to earn credit.

You should successfully complete this course and upload a screenshot of your completion certificate NLT 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 8.

Cleaning Your Copy: Grammar, Style and More. This free self-directed course from Poynter will help you understand the basics of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and AP style. It will also help you brush up on your skills to create clean, error-free copy throughout the semester (and beyond). You should set aside approximately four hours to complete this online module. You can access the free course here > <https://www.poynter.org/shop/self-directed-course/cleaning-your-copy/>

You should successfully complete this course and upload a screenshot of your completion certificate by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 12.

Podcast. You will create a 5- to 6-minute podcast script and recording on a topic of your choice. The topic can be anything of interest to you. The podcast should include an introduction monologue (30 – 60 seconds), musical jingle (15 seconds), one topic point (3 minutes), closing remarks (1 – 2 minutes), and closing music jingle (15 seconds). Both the script and the audio recording should be uploaded in Canvas. More details will be provided in class and on Canvas.

The podcast script and recording are due NLT 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 10

White paper. You will write a 5- to 7-page white paper on a single topic related to the core mission of the organization you are analyzing throughout the semester. For example, if you are analyzing an organization focused on the environment, you could write a white paper in support of proposed legislation that would improve environmental regulations in your community. Because white papers serve as authoritative guides that address issues and how to solve them, you are required to include at least 5 academic sources to support your arguments in this paper. More details will be provided in class and on Canvas.

The white paper is due as a Word document NLT 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 26.

Strategic media proposal. For this assignment you will respond to a hypothetical request for proposals (RFP) put out by an organization you select at the beginning of the semester to hire an agency to help them improve their strategic writing and messaging strategies. More details will be provided in class and on Canvas.

The strategic media proposal is due as a Word AND a .PDF document NLT 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 30.

Final presentation. For your final presentation, you will be pitching to me and your classmates as if we oversee hiring the outside agency to help the organization improve its messaging and writing on our current platforms, as well as any recommendations you have for new platforms.

You will have only 5 – 7 minutes for your pitch, so you will want it to be focused and persuasive. This isn't an overview presentation of everything you've done. You are trying to make a persuasive argument to us based on your research about changes our organization should make or practices that we should continue. You will be graded on the soundness of your arguments, your ability to integrate both research you conducted as well as external research into the presentation, and general presentation delivery skills. You will also be deducted points for going over time.

Your final presentation is due as a link or file NLT 5 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 3. Your final presentations will happen in class on Monday, Dec. 4 (the last day of class).

Grading	
Weekly blog discussion posts	20%
Discussant	20%
Assignments	25%
Strategic Media Proposal & Presentation	30%
Class participation	5%

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4% B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4% C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4% D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4% F 0-59.4%

Contacting me

The best and quickest way to contact me is via email (ksmarks@memphis.edu). I will respond to email with 24 – 48 hours. You can also drop by my office hours or schedule an in-person or Zoom meeting with me. If you have a problem, do not let it snowball. Contact me ASAP.

ChatGPT/AI

You are permitted to use ChatGPT and other AI tools to assist you in gathering information, writing drafts, and revising your writing in this course. However, you are expected to include a disclosure statement at the end of your assignment describing which AI tool you used and how you used it. For example, "*ChatGPT was used to draft about 30% of this assignment and to provide revision assistance. AI-produced content was edited for accuracy and style.*"

Additionally, submit any prompts you used for assistance with your assignment as well as the original ChatGPT output and to be able to explain/show how you fact-checked and improved upon the AI's work.

Schedule

Below is an overview of the schedule for the semester. The schedule is subject to change and the schedule in Canvas always supersedes this one.

Week 1. Aug. 28: What is strategic media and why is writing so important?

Week 2. Sept. 4: No Class (Labor Day)

Week 3. Sept. 11: Ethics of writing for strategic media (including ethics of AI & ChatGPT)

Week 4. Sept. 18: Identifying your audience (& adapting your writing to different audience demographics)

Week 5. Sept. 25: Finding your voice (personal branding)

Week 6. Oct. 2: Persuasion and strategic writing (a theoretical perspective)

Week 7. Oct. 9: Writing persuasively (putting week 6 theory into practice)

Week 8. Oct. 16: No Class (Fall Break)

Week 9. Oct. 23: Organizational voice in strategic writing & including diverse voices (DE&I)

Week 10. Oct. 30: Writing for traditional media

Week 11. Nov. 6: Writing for social media

Week 12. Writing with authority

Week 13. Nov. 20: Writing for audio & visual

Week 14. Nov. 27: Writing for crisis

Week 15. Dec. 4: Final presentation

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

AI/Chat GPT

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. Substantially reworking the original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

Academic integrity

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

In addition to University-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own, as acts of cheating and punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

Online SETEs

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the "Student Pages" dropdown menu and select "My Resources" and find the SETE evaluation forms; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Diversity and inclusivity

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such,

faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

Weather policy

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website and the LiveSafe App regarding inclement weather.

Student support

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.