

Public Relations Writing

JOUR 3421-101

Summer 2015

MTWRF 12:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m., Meeman 206

Dr. Melissa Janoske

Office: Meeman 306

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 2:45 – 4:30 p.m. and by appointment

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION

Emphasis on communication tactics; plan, write, and produce public relations tools; audience and media selection; print and electronic media

PREREQUISITES

JOUR 2121, JOUR 3400

TEXTBOOKS

Recommended: Newsom, D., & Haynes, J. (2014). *Public relations writing: Form and style* (10th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

The Associated Press stylebook 2013 (or 2014). New York: Basic Books.

CLASSROOM FORMAT

This class will be presented in lecture and laboratory formats. There is also opportunity for group work on several assignments. Students will write and submit assignments that will be returned with feedback meant to encourage student improvement over the course of the semester.

GRADING

There are 1,000 possible points in this class. At the end of the semester, your class average will be calculated and fractions will be rounded to the nearest whole number. Letter grades will be determined according to the scale below.

Writing Assignments

Fact sheet	50 points
News release	75 points
Feature release	75 points
Position paper	75 points
Brochure	50 points
Social media release	50 points
Video PSA	75 points

Media Kit 75 points

Personal Portfolio 75 points

Personal Resume 75 points

<i>HootSuite completion</i>	50 points
<i>PRSA Luncheon</i>	25 points
<i>Class Participation</i>	250 points
<i>Total</i>	1,000 points

A+	965-1000	B+	865-894	C+	765-794	D+	665-694
A	925-964	B	825-864	C	725-764	D	625-664
A-	895-924	B-	795-824	C-	695-724	D-	595-624
						F	Below 595

Quality of Work

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar, and language. A large part of public relations is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. This includes all class work and presentations. Problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

I expect your work to be good and to be yours. What is not yours should be fully cited. In documenting sources you may use either APA or MLA formatting. If you need help with writing and citing sources, please see me for resources. In addition, Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource, and can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

Questions about Grades

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me outside of class time, as I will not discuss grades via email or during class. If you have a question or problem with a grade, exam question, or in-class assignment, you have 48 hours after the assignment is returned to you to contact me, or the grade stands. Your question or appeal must be stated in writing, citing your position and why you feel the mark is incorrect. The appeal should be turned in to the professor or sent via email within the stated time frame.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade online and meeting with the professor early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade. Meeting with the professor early and often can help both parties involved find ways to improve student-instructor understanding and quality of work.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a basic schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. Although every effort will be made to stick with this schedule, please understand that some material may require more or less discussion and class time. Thus, changes to the schedule may occur. All changes will be announced in class.

<i>Week Of</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment(s)</i>
June 1	No class	
(T) June 2	Syllabus and course overview Socialnomics, One Second, Bic for Women	What is PR writing?
(W) June 3	Persuasion and Sensory Language	Discuss fact sheet
(R) June 4	Examples of excellent writing: Apple Watch, Disney Writing for Social Media	
(F) June 5	Media Relations and Press Releases	Write a pitch Fact sheet due
(M) June 8	Research and Environmental Scanning Writing for Multiple Platforms	
(T) June 9	Relationship Management	Activism responses Press release due
(W) June 10	Law and Ethics	Ethical scenarios
(R) June 11	PRSA Luncheon	Media relations
(F) June 12	Writing to Be Understood	SMNR due
(M) June 15	Blogger Relations	Caitlin Boyle?
(T) June 16	Guest Speaker: Kim Rossie	Feature release due
(W) June 17	Internal Communication	Writing SM policy
(R) June 18	Organizational Voice	Slim Jim
(F) June 19	Audio and Visual Writing	Brochure due
(M) June 22	Diversity	
(T) June 23	Crisis Communication	
(W) June 24	Crisis Communication	Position paper due
(R) June 25	Evaluating Social Media	
(F) June 26	Guest speaker	
(M) June 29	Visual Media	Video PSA due
(T) June 30	Topic TBD	HootSuite due
(W) July 1	Media kit work day	

(R) July 2

Final Exam!
Final presentations

Kit/Resume/Portfolio
Extra credit due

FIVE PILLARS FOR JOUR 3421

- **Professionalism:** In JOUR 3421, students will learn the professional and ethical standards of the public relations industry by discussing ethics statements from a variety of professional organizations, working through simulated ethical scenarios from a variety of perspectives, and learning how and why legal ramifications may exist within the field. Students will continue work on their personal portfolio site as a way of establishing their personal professional brand.
- **Writing:** JOUR 3421 focuses on writing for a variety of public relations formats, including press releases, position or white papers, fact sheets, press conference statements, brochures and newsletters, writing for various social media platforms, and feature releases. Students also edit and critique not only their work but also the work of their peers.
- **Multimedia:** Students in JOUR 3421 look at the use of social media in public relations, including the potential for community engagement and management, the importance of consistent organizational voice across multiple platforms, and how to translate one message into a variety of social media platforms.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students in JOUR 3421 must demonstrate an understanding of writing for a specific public, writing from a specific point of view for an organization, and how to choose the best media channel to accomplish both of those tasks.
- **Media Literacy:** Students in JOUR 3421 will increase their media literacy by looking at how to engage with a variety of traditional and social media, to see how relationships and communities are built within these channels, and how to interact and engage with others in the media appropriately.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING

- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communication;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET

Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):

Students will:

- Explain how the writer's purpose, intended public and requirements of the medium affect style and content;
- Recognize potential problems and solutions in media relations;
- Recognize legal and ethical problems associated with public relations writing;
- Understand the differences between writing for print and writing for mass/social media.

Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):

Students will:

- Earn a passing score on written assignments, quizzes and exams;
- Apply AP guidelines to written materials;
- Proofread and edit your own work and the work of others;
- Meaningfully participate in discussion board topics;
- Pitch story ideas to news media;
- Respond to crisis communication situations
- Develop a media kit to demonstrate a holistic understanding of an organization's public relations output

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR PR WRITING

This class is designed to equip students with the skills needed to write correctly in controlled, mass and social media outlets for various audiences.

Students will:

- Use resources to target appropriate media outlets;
- Use AP guidelines on written materials;
- Proofread and edit own work and the work of others;
- Manage timelines/deadlines; and
- Respond appropriately to a crisis communication situation using appropriate techniques, tools and media.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communication;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communication.
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society.
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communication professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communication professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation.

Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentrations.

EMAIL: You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to <http://iam.memphis.edu> to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the university. Personal student information, such as grades, is restricted to your UM email address.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS: Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for his/her specific class.

ATTENDANCE

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your "job" in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

No points will be deducted from your final grade if you have three or fewer absences. Each additional absence beyond those four will result in a deduction of five percentage points from your final numerical average. For example, if your final average is 83 (B) and you have four absences, your course grade would be a 78 (C+).

This absence policy includes **ALL** absences. It will be assumed that each absence is valid. If you are on a school-sponsored trip or are ill and miss class, it will count. No verification, explanation, or note is necessary.

In addition, frequently we will engage in class exercises that will count as participation points; if you are not in class, you cannot make up the participation points. When there are in-class editing activities, students are expected to work on those assignments and not other coursework. Students will be expected to stay in class for at least half of the time allotted to editing, or will be counted absent.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions or dismissal of the student from the university.

“Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com’s restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.” (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

Intellectual property and copyright guidelines

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook: The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

ONLINE SETEs

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

DISABILITY

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

DIVERSITY

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communications reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

WEATHER POLICY: Check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day’s work.