

PUR4100: Public Relations Writing

Spring 2023

Monday, 10:40 a.m.-12:35 p.m. & Wednesday, 10:40 a.m.-12:35 p.m. ET

Instructor: Jeannie Clary

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Phone: 727.278.8216

Credits: 4

Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

Tentative Zoom Link: https://ufl.zoom.us/join/60qj0tG9wRzzRgHRtWMesU_aFrUpam

Meeting ID: 989 0704 6718

Passcode: 061967

Online Course Administration

e-Learning in Canvas <http://elearning.ufl.edu/> will be used to administer the course communication, materials, and grades.

Availability

Please feel free to speak with me during the semester about any questions or concerns you have. You can also reach me by email and I'll do my best to get back to you within 24 hours. If it's urgent, you may text me, but please don't text after 8 p.m.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Writing is essential to a successful career in public relations. Clients, corporate leaders, media and audiences will rely on your ability to write polished, clear communication quickly. You will need to adapt your writing style to changing environments, audiences and materials. Becoming an outstanding writer will make your PR services invaluable and help you succeed in day-to-day business. In this course, you will master the core qualities of excellent public relations writing and develop the skills to build communications materials for real clients. This course is centered on you and your needs. As such, the course will provide the opportunity for hands-on learning and real-world applications to help you gain experience and build a robust portfolio that showcases your strategic writing skills.

The course will include:

- **Lectures and discussions**, including guest speakers and engaging conversations focused on reading assignments, current news and best-in-class case studies. Reading assignments will be posted online or distributed in class. Students are expected to keep up with the readings and come prepared to discuss these.
- **Writing assignments**, during which you'll apply what we've discussed in class. Over the course of these in-class assignments, you'll develop a series of public relations materials, including news releases, fact sheets, media briefs and more. You will work under tight deadlines that simulate industry environments.
- **Peer-to-peer collaboration**, like that which is required in the professional world. Select assignments will require interactivity and collaboration among students and peer-to-peer critique.
- A **strategic communications plan & media kit project** for a client of your choice. You will have the opportunity to imagine a new client product, service, initiative, brand or similar. Most of your writing assignments will be completed on behalf of this client, as you build the media kit for a communications campaign. The client must be an existing, real organization. You do not have to obtain permission from the client or notify them.
 - *NOTE: Because the client will have its own existing messaging, please carefully review the Academic Honesty portion of the syllabus. It is critical to your success in this class that you're careful not to use existing messaging or content beyond the basic elements of the client's brand.*

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this class, students will master the basic writing skills of public relations professionals to prepare them to meet the demands of today's industry. Students will:

- Recognize the importance of excellent writing for success in both the public relations profession and day-to-day business;
- Learn to write clear, concise, compelling, accurate and logically organized materials and content, following style and grammar rules;
- Develop public relations materials (such as key messages, backgrounders, media briefs, media lists, etc.) that effectively and strategically meet your public relations objectives;
- Understand the purpose of public relations materials, and learn when and how to strategically use these.
- Learn how to tailor communications – including content, style and format – based on your target audiences and public relations objectives;
- Develop and apply critical thinking, listening and professional skills through assignments that mimic industry work with clients and peers.

COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM & COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the US;
- 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 communications;
- 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;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications 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 current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

PREREQUISITES

To enroll in this course, you must have completed and received a grade of C or better in PUR3000 (Principles of Public Relations) and JOU3101 (Reporting). Familiarity with visual design is helpful, but not necessary.

COURSE MATERIALS

Students must stay current with all reading assignments, which must be completed prior to class. Students should come to class ready to discuss all assigned readings and share their insights, thoughts and questions. This will count toward the student's class participation grade. Students may choose to purchase or rent the required course books. Additional required readings may be assigned throughout the course.

Required Text (also available online):

- The Associated Press Stylebook 2018 and Briefing on Media Law. The Associated Press, 2018. (ISBN: 0917360672)

Suggested Resources:

- Wilcox, Dennis L., and Bryan H. Reber. Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques. 8th ed., Pearson, 2016. (ISBN: 0134010493)
- Kessler, Lauren, and Duncan McDonald. When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style. 9th ed., Cengage Learning, 2016. (ISBN: 1285052471) • USB Flash Drive – This will be used to save and back up all writing assignments.
- Strunk, William, and E. B. White. The Elements of Style. 4th ed., Pearson, 2014. (ISBN: 020530902X)
- Students are also encouraged to read public relations publications (i.e. PR Week, PR News) and stay up to date with current events.

Useful Web Sites

[PRWeek](#)

[PRovoke](#)

[IPR Research Letter](#)

[PRNEWS](#)

COURSE PROFESSIONALISM

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school, and students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. Carefully consider how you participate and the assignments you submit. You can use humor and demonstrate creativity; in fact, I encourage it. But just as we do with client work, always think ahead to how it will reflect on you. Use your best professional judgment.

IMPORTANT: Students are expected to arrive on time via Zoom, not leave early, and wait for the class to end before signing off. Please keep your Zoom screens on for the majority of class, unless you need to briefly leave your computer or arrange to have it off head of time. Please note that continually keeping your screen off will negatively impact your class participation grade. In the event of an emergency, notify me at the start of class.

Discussion Demeanor: I want this class to be fun and energetic with great discussions, and we may cover sensitive topics and ones about which some students will have diverse opinions or may have strong feelings. Therefore, I expect you to be courteous and respectful to your fellow classmates. Please be polite to others while both expressing opinions and responding to them. *Any form of disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.*

ACADEMIC HONESTY

- The work you submit for this course must be your own. You must never use direct or paraphrased material from any source, including websites, without attribution. You will choose a client and build messages for them throughout the semester, which will require you to examine their real-world messaging. You might be tempted to use their existing content. **RESIST THE TEMPTATION!** We will discuss in class how to create your own original messaging and content in a way that fits the client's brand, but does not plagiarize.
- You must cite sources for and use quotes around anything used word-for-word from any source. This includes organizations' or companies' websites, internal documents and materials.
 - Please note that source "citations" in PR are not the same as in MLA, Chicago Style or other academic citations. We will discuss in class.
- All work submitted must be original work for this course.
- Plagiarizing another student's work or having another student complete the assignment for you is considered academic dishonesty.

Any incident of academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the UF Honor Code, which provides examples of unethical academic behavior, such as cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation and

fabrication. Any case of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for this course. You may review the Student Conduct & Honor Codes here: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>.

CLASS ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

I believe professionals should be treated like adults because we are adults. The same is true of UF students. Life happens, and if anyone understands that, it's this professor! However, in your professional career, consistently missing or arriving late to or leaving early from work, meetings or client events will reflect poorly on your professionalism and commitment. As such, the same will be applied to our class via Zoom.

Class attendance is required as part of your participation grade. **Three (3) absences will be excused** before it affects your grade. Attendance will be taken every class, except for those designated as working days or one-on-one meeting days. If you know you will be absent (i.e. due to a religious holiday or extra-curricular, school-related activity), please notify me as early as possible to coordinate making up assignments.

Classes will begin promptly. **Any more than two (2) unexcused late arrivals will negatively impact your class participation grade. Five minutes (10:50 a.m.) will be considered "late."** Punctuality is particularly important in an online class so we can begin on time. However, if you know you will be late and notify me ahead of time so we don't wait on you, I will take it into consideration.

Requirements for class attendance, make-up assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments must be "client-ready," which means they have been proofread, reviewed and formatted so that they are ready to submit to your client – or in this case, to me. Everything you write for this course must be thoughtful, coherent and carefully edited. Misspellings, syntax and grammatical errors unacceptable, particularly for PR students – and especially for UF PR students. These errors will affect your grade considerably. AP Style guidelines should be followed for all materials.

All writing assignments will be submitted as typed Word documents through Canvas. Assignments are due at least one hour before class on the due date listed. Please come to class with the assigned readings complete for each day and be prepared to discuss. On many days, the majority of class will be spent working on assignments listed.

Dates and assignments are subject to change but will always be done with plenty of notice, and always to your benefit. In other words, changes will give you more time to complete the work, not less. All changes will be sent through Canvas as Announcements and/or emails, and will be updated in the Canvas syllabus.

DEADLINES

Public relations professionals are often bound by tight, important deadlines and missing these can damage their and their clients' credibility. I will not accept late assignment submissions. **"Late" is considered anything submitted after 10:45 a.m. on the due date, unless otherwise noted.** Lost files are not an acceptable excuse for late or missing work. Remember Murphy's Law. Please back up all your files; you may choose to do so on a USB flash drive, Google Drive, iCloud, Dropbox, etc.

If for any reason, you think you will miss a deadline, please discuss it with me in advance. Under legitimate extenuating circumstances, I may agree to let you schedule a makeup or turn in an assignment late. However, if I have not agreed to an extension or makeup before the deadlines, your assignment grade will be a zero if not turned in on time.

As your assignments will all be turned in via Canvas or email, please be mindful of possible technical difficulties and plan accordingly. (I strongly recommend NOT waiting until the last minute to submit.) It is your responsibility to complete assignments by deadlines. If you experience any technical difficulties, first contact the UF HelpDesk at (352) 392-HELP. If they cannot resolve the problem, then please contact me directly.

GRADING POLICY

Obviously PUR4100 – PR Writing requires a significant amount of writing. As a PR professional still active in the field, I believe one of the best ways I can help my students hone their writing skills is through extensive editing. I provide incredibly detailed edits and feedback on every assignment. As such, grades will often take longer to return. If your next assignment requires the feedback from the current assignment, I always move back the deadlines.

Your grade will be determined by performance on writing assignments throughout the semester and your final project. Final grades will be based on the following scale:

- A 90 – 100 percent
- B 80 – 89 percent
- C 70 – 79 percent
- D 60 – 69 percent
- E 0 – 59 percent

FINAL GRADE COMPONENTS

- **Writing Assignments (40%):** There will be several writing assignments on which you will be graded. For select assignments, you will submit a first draft (for in-class critique and revisions) and a final draft. *All assignments, including drafts, must be submitted to receive credit.* Select writing assignments will be completed and due in class. These will be completed “on deadline,” simulating industry demands. Points will be awarded based on your understanding of the assignment, level of creativity, and your ability to write compelling, accurate and precise copy.
- **Speech, Speech Presentation & Media Brief (10%):** This is a multi-part project, including: 1. Speech Writing 2. Speech Preparation & Delivery 3. Media Brief. PR pros are often called upon to prepare clients for interviews and write content that works with their client’s “voice.” In turn, PR pros must often answer media questions on material with which they are unfamiliar. This will help you think through those components.
 - You will pair up with a classmate. Your classmate will serve as your client’s “spokesperson.”
 - You will write a 3–5-minute speech for your partner to deliver.
 - Prior to delivering the speech, you will prep your “spokesperson” via “media training,” helping your partner:
 - Practice their speech delivery
 - Prepare for potential media questions with the appropriate answers
 - After your partner delivers the speech, you will act as PR pro would in a press conference, facilitating media questions. Prof. Clary and your classmates will act as journalists.
 - You will also develop an interview brief, including potential Q&A from media (Prof. Clary & your classmates). The brief will prepare your partner/“spokesperson” for what media might focus on by including talking points. The brief will also include a short bio on one journalist from your target media list and a list of a few recent articles by that journalist.
- **Discussion Leading, Peer Editing & Class Participation (20%):**
 - **Discussion Leading:** Each student will be assigned a partner(s) and week during when they will lead our class lecture. Your team will be responsible for reading the week’s reading assignments and creating a lecture on the material.
 - **Peer Editing:** Editing is critical in PR. We edit our clients’ work, but we must also edit our own work. However, it can be difficult to spot a mistake in something you’ve been working on, and sometimes we need a pair of fresh eyes. You will often have the opportunity to have

- peers edit your work during class, using tracked changes, and you will be expected to edit theirs.
- **Attendance & Punctuality:** Attendance and punctuality will impact your grade. However, it is also important to be present and engaged in the class. However, I understand that some people are not fully comfortable with speaking up in class, particularly on Zoom. As such, there are several ways to receive full credit for class participation (If you truly do not feel you will be able to speak up via Zoom, please let me know via email during the first week of class so I know):
 - Participate in & make meaningful contributions to class discussions by speaking up or asking questions/adding comments via the Zoom chat
 - Provide valuable *constructive* criticism and editing of classmates' writing assignments
 - Send relevant or interesting items to add to the class discussion news stories, nonfiction essays, PR work
 - Email Professor Clary with suggested relevant topics for class discussion
 - Other
 - **FINAL PROJECT: Strategic Communications Plan & Media Kit (30 percent)** – This is your final project for the course. At the beginning of the semester, we will choose a real-world client (though you do not need to receive permission from the client to use them for your project), and you will develop a strategic communications plan for the introduction/launch of a new client product, service, initiative, brand or similar. You will also have the opportunity to use your best work or revise and improve low scores on assignments from the semester to create your portfolio. The media kit will also include assignments you develop throughout the semester. Your plan will be graded on your understanding of the elements of the plan; your creativity; being able to pull all of the elements, including seemingly disparate assignments, together into one cohesive document; and the plan's presentation.
 - I'm available during office hours, one-on-one meetings and working days to answer any questions and provide guidance.

How Assignments Will Be Graded

I will grade all assignments on a 100-point scale.

- A 90 – 100 percent – Professional and could be published as-is
- B 80 – 89 percent – Strong but needs minor revisions
- C 70 – 79 percent – Errors needs major revisions
- D 60 – 69 percent – Needs to be re-written
- E 0 – 59 percent – Unacceptable/missed deadline

Below is a general rubric for each assignment. Please note that as the semester goes on, you will be expected to improve your work based on my feedback. Continuing to make the same mistakes after receiving feedback in more than one assignment will earn deductions:

- **Content, Creativity & Strategy (60 percent)** – Points are awarded for clear, compelling, accurate and logically organized writing. Points are also awarded for demonstrating an understanding of the assignment. Points are also awarded for creative, interesting and strategic work that shows you understand your client and audiences. The writing keeps the reader glued to the page.
- **Grammar, Attribution & AP Style (20 percent)** – These are the basics, including syntax, spelling, grammar, punctuation and AP Style.
 - **Grammatical, spelling or typographical error** – 2 points deducted for each
 - **AP Style error** – 2 points deducted for each
 - **Missing Attribution** – 2 points deducted for each
- **Submission & Presentation (20 percent)** – All work must be client-ready. Points are awarded for the Canvas "email" submissions (including subject line and message). The following will negatively affect your grades:
 - **Fact error, including misspelling any proper name** – 10 points deducted

- **Using the wrong format** – 10 points deducted
- Assignments that are submitted late will receive a 0.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Religious Holy Days

By UF policy, a student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day must notify me of his or her pending absence in advance of a religious holy day, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment or activity within a reasonable time after the absence.

COURSE EVALUATION

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](http://uf.computinghelpdesk.com) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage](#) for more information.

On-Line Students Complaints: View the [Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).

CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).

University Police Department: Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

UNIVERSITY HONESTY POLICY

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TA in this class.