

**Updated August 20, 2015**

**Course: Writing for Public Relations—PUR 4100**

**Section: 4071**

**Class Times: Monday and Wednesday, periods 4 and 5 (10:40-12:35)**

**Class Location: Weimer 2056**

**Instructor: Professor Ann Christiano**

**3057 Weimer Hall**

**[achristiano@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:achristiano@jou.ufl.edu)**

**(609) 647-3877**—This is my cell number. Please use this number to reach me with questions or schedule appointments, but no texts, please.

**Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 2-4 pm**

### **Course Overview**

In this course, you will master the core qualities of excellent writing for public relations and public interest communications.

As a public relations or communications professional, it is imperative that you learn to write well and convey a message across a variety of forms and mediums, and learn to write quickly. Because the best way to achieve better writing skills is to write frequently, you will complete and rewrite weekly writing assignments. Reading assignments will be posted online or distributed in class, and will come from real life examples. By the end of the course, you will have a portfolio of writing samples that demonstrate your ability not only to write well, but to think strategically on behalf of a client or cause.

This course is centered on you and your learning needs, with ample time and opportunity for hands-on learning. Each week, we will combine lecture and discussion with class labs that will give you an opportunity to apply what you've learned from the discussion with hands-on experience. Over the course of these labs, you will generate news releases, fact sheets, speeches and speech memos and ultimately, a strategic communications plan. Each lab will include an opportunity for you to receive constructive critiques of your writing from me and from your classmates.

At the beginning of the course, you will identify a client. The client may be an organization you have volunteered with in the past, or an organization where you would like to work. The client must be an existing organization. No hypothetical or imagined clients will be accepted. Most of your writing assignments will be completed on behalf of this client. While I do not require you to obtain permission from the client or notify them, you may find it helpful to do so to gain necessary information to complete the assignments for this course. You will identify the core messages and audiences for that organization's cause and translate those messages across a variety of forms of strategic communication.

In this course, we will adhere to AP style. All work completed for this course is expected to be your own *original* work. I have a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism, and I expect that you are familiar with the University's policy on academic honesty and will follow that

policy without exception. Students who plagiarize will fail this course. Factual and grammatical errors will not be tolerated, and will count against your grade for the given assignment. These include mathematical errors, word misuse, misspellings of the client's name or misuse of terms associated with relevant content or research.

### **Course Objectives**

1. You will master the basic formats used most frequently in writing for public relations and public interest communications, including client proposals, news releases, speeches and speech memos, boilerplate language, op-eds, message platforms, fact sheets, backgrounders, one-pagers and the components of a strategic communications plan.
2. You will understand the appropriate purposes of each of these kinds of documents and be able to make strategic decisions about when and how to employ them.
3. You will understand the importance of excellent writing to the success of your career.
4. You will learn and appreciate the importance of rewriting documents.
5. You will learn to write compelling, focused, persuasive, accurate and strategic documents that are logically organized and use correct grammar under deadline.
6. You will learn the importance of understanding who your audience is and how to craft your message and choose your medium accordingly.

### **Prerequisites**

To enroll in this course, you must have completed and received a grade of C or better in PUR 3000 (Principles of Public Relations) and JOU 3101 (Reporting). Familiarity with graphic design is helpful, but not necessary.

### **Appointments**

Please stop by during office hours to discuss assignments, materials or other concerns related to the course. You may also schedule a meeting with me via email. My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus.

### **Course Professionalism**

This College is a professional school, and professional decorum is expected at all times. I expect you to adhere to workplace norms of collegial and respectful interaction. That specifically means that you will

1. Arrive on time.
2. Not speak when another student or the instructor are speaking.
3. Use cell phones, lap tops or other electronic devices, except as part of in-class assignments.

I expect that you will welcome and treat with respect the diverse perspectives of your fellow students, as will I. Violations of these expectations may result in students being asked to leave class and a lowering of your grade.

### **Class Attendance Policy**

Class attendance is not required, but missing class will affect your participation grade. Please do not ask me to review material that I covered when you missed class, unless you missed class due to serious illness. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at:

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

## **Academic Honesty**

The work you submit for this course must be your own. It must be original for this course. You must never use direct or paraphrased material from any source, including Web sites, without attribution. Attribution means citing the source of your facts within the text. Ideas that come from others must be credited.

You may not submit anything that you wrote for another class, or that you wrote as a volunteer or intern. You may not submit anything that was written for any purpose other than the given assignment.

I will handle any incident of academic dishonesty in accordance with the University of Florida policies that address cheating and unethical academic behavior, specifically the UF Honor Code and the Academic Honesty Guidelines.

Any case of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for this course. I will follow University Guidelines for any offense.

Any time you complete an assignment for this course you will clearly attribute the source of your information, including information obtained from organizations' web sites or internal documents. You cannot copy anything word for word, regardless of the source, without putting quotes around it and attributing the source.

For this class, we will use the MLA in-text citation method. To be clear, I expect that you will:

1. Put quotes around anything that includes more than three words in a row that were written by someone else.
2. Cite any data or fact that you did not personally discover and is not widely known.
3. Cite ideas you have paraphrased or incorporated into your papers.

Citation means providing attribution within the text for any ideas, insights or facts that are not your own. You must also list your sources in a bibliography.

## **Format**

Everything you write for this course must be coherent, logical and carefully edited. Misspellings, syntax and grammatical errors are unacceptable in upper-level college writing, particularly writing by public relations students. Use page numbers in every assignment.

## **Requesting Feedback**

I am happy to meet with you to address challenges you may be having or aspects that you're not clear on following class discussions. The best time to do that is during my office hours or by appointment. Please don't send me complete assignments for feedback before the due date. I'm always happy to answer specific questions about a project you're working on or the approach you're planning to take.

## **Email**

I am happy to answer simple questions via email, though more complex ones will benefit from in-person discussion. Please make use of my office hours and class time to ask questions about assignments and concepts. Please don't email me with a question about your assignment within 24 hours of the due date.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

### **Grading Policy**

**Your grade will be determined by performance on a series of writing assignments. There will be no exams for this course. Your final grade will be a result of your overall performance in the course.**

#### **Class Participation**

**10 percent**

Class participation counts toward 10 percent of your final grade. While missed classes harm your participation grade, perfect attendance does not ensure that you will receive the full 10 percent for class participation. You must be fully present during class, contribute to discussions, provide constructive and thoughtful feedback to your classmates, and demonstrate through your comments that you have read and understood assigned readings and benefited from class discussions.

#### **Writing Assignments**

**45 percent**

There are nine writing assignments on which you will be graded. In many cases, you will submit the first draft for discussion after the first hour of class lab, and a second draft no later than one hour before the beginning of the next class. Assignments and due dates are clearly noted on the syllabus. Both must be submitted to receive credit for the assignment. Your second draft must demonstrate significant improvements over the first draft and reflect classroom feedback.

I will grade your writing assignments on a 100-point scale.

I will award points based on your demonstrated understanding of the assignment, the level of creativity, and your ability to write compelling, accurate and precise copy.

**No late writing assignments will be accepted. Writing assignments may not be made up.**

#### **Client Proposal Project**

**5 percent**

#### **Speech and Speech Presentation**

**10 percent**

You will pair up with a classmate and write a speech for that classmate to deliver. You will also prepare a speech memo and anticipated Q and A. You and the person who delivers your speech will share the same grade for this assignment.

Over the course of your career, you will often be required to develop speeches that others deliver—this assignment will help you think through the components of preparing a speaker to deliver content with which they may be unfamiliar.

**Strategic Communications Plan**

**30 percent**

We will spend four weeks toward the end of the semester discussing and developing a strategic communications plan. Your final plan and your presentation of the plan will comprise 35 percent of your grade. I expect that you will develop the components along the way, and meet with me during office hours to discuss the work you’ve completed. Your plan will be graded on your demonstrated understanding of the specific components and your ability to pull them together into a single cohesive document.

Grades will be assigned 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

**Late Work**

**No assignments will be accepted after the due date.**

I will assign and distribute additional readings throughout the course.

Please bring an external hard drive to every class and back up your files using Dropbox. Lost files are not an acceptable excuse for late or missing work.

**Class Discussion and Assignment Schedule:**

	Monday	Wednesday
Week 1	August 24	August 26
<b>Clients and their Audiences</b>	<p>Course Overview</p> <p>Distribute syllabus, client selection form and readings for Monday.</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Know your audience</i></p> <p><b>Audience identification and client selection assignment distributed</b></p>	<p><b>Assignment 1 Due: Completed client selection form and audience identification form—Bring printouts of both to class</b></p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Creating a client proposal</i></p> <p><b>Client proposal assignment distributed</b></p>

<p>Week 2</p> <p><b>Business Letters and Proposals</b></p>	<p>August 31</p> <p>Class Lab: Begin writing client proposal</p>	<p>September 2</p> <p><b>Project 1 Due: Client Proposal</b></p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Message Strategy and Storytelling</i></p> <p><b>Message strategy assignment distributed</b></p>
<p>Week 3</p> <p><b>Message Strategy and Storytelling</b></p>	<p>September 7</p> <p><b>NO CLASS MEETING—Labor Day</b></p>	<p>September 9</p> <p><b>Assignment 2 Due: Message Strategy</b></p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>News Releases, Pitch Memos, Statements, and Advisories</i></p> <p><b>News release and boilerplate assignment distributed</b></p>
<p>Week 4</p> <p><b>Working with the News Media</b></p>	<p>September 14</p> <p>Class Lab: News release and boilerplate</p>	<p>September 16</p> <p><b>Assignment 3 Due: News release and boilerplate</b></p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Creating media lists</i></p> <p><b>Media list assignment distributed</b></p>
<p>Week 5</p> <p><b>Working with the News Media Creating Media Lists</b></p>	<p>September 21</p> <p>Class Lab: Creating media lists Class Discussion: <i>Conducting a social media audit, writing your social media strategy</i></p>	<p>September 23</p> <p><b>Assignment 4 Due: Media List</b></p> <p>Class Lab: Writing your social media audit,</p>

Week 6 <b>Social Media Audits and Strategy</b>	September 28 Class Lab:  Conducting a communications audit	September 30  <b>Assignment 5 Due: Communications audit and strategy memo</b>
Week 7 <b>Fact Sheets</b>	October 5  Class Discussion: <i>Writing one pagers and fact sheets</i>	October 7  Class Lab: One pagers and fact sheets
Week 8 <b>Speechwriting</b>	October 12  <b>Assignment 6 Due: Fact Sheet</b>  Class Discussion: <i>Writing for verbal communication: speeches, background memos and Q &amp; A</i>  Class time to work with speech partner  <b>Speech assignment distributed</b>	October 14  Class Lab: Speechwriting and Q & A Memo
Week 9 <b>Presenting</b>	October 19  <b>Project 2 Due: Five-minute speech, Q &amp; A and speech memo.</b>  Speech presentations  Bring two printed copies of completed assignment to class.	October 21  Speech presentations  Class Lab: Fact Sheet
Week 10	October 26	October 28



<b>Collateral and Creative Briefs</b>	Class Discussion: <i>Using collateral, creating a creative brief</i>	Class Lab: Writing the creative brief
Week 11  <b>Creating a Strategic Communications Plan</b>	November 2  <b>Assignment 7 Due: Creative Brief</b>  Class Discussion: <i>Beginning the strategic communications plan. The significance of a strategic communications plan, what it is, why we create one.</i>	November 4  Class Lab: Developing your strategic communications plan: Audience definition
Week 12  <b>Creating a Strategic Communications Plan</b>	November 9  Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Setting measurable goals</i>	November 11  Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Defining the relevant context Message and audience</i>
Week 13  <b>Creating a Strategic Communications Plan</b>	November 16  Class work and critique time	November 18  Class work and critique time
Week 14  <b>Creating Your Strategic Communications Plan</b>	November 24  Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Evaluating future opportunities Implementation and tactics</i>  <i>Bios, cover letters, and resumes</i>  <b>Cover Letter Assignment Distributed</b>	November 26  NO CLASS

Week 15  <b>One-on-one Meetings</b>	November 30  Meetings to discuss strategic communications plans	December 2  Meetings to discuss strategic communications plans
Week 16  <b>Finalizing the Strategic Communications Plan</b>	December 7  <b>Assignment 8 Due: Bios, Resumes and Cover Letters</b>  Class Discussion: <i>Class critique of cover letter, bios and resumes</i>	December 9  <b>Final Communications Plan Due</b>  <b>Assignment 9 will be completed in class</b>

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

## **Guidelines for Assignment Grades:**

Assignments that receive As:

- Are interesting
- Compare favorably with the best examples of work I share in class
- Are clearly organized
- Rely heavily on stories and visual language
- Are free of grammatical, spelling, fact or typographical errors
- Show an understanding of both the lecture and the assignment
- Include strong transitions
- Are concise but complete—not overwritten or puffy, but include relevant messages and information
- Are consistent with your message
- Are free of fact errors
- Meticulously cite source materials using MLA style
- Where appropriate, include 5 or more sources of information
- Encourage me to keep reading with use of flow and narrative
- Truthful and accurate
- Demonstrate a strong understanding of the client and their needs, as well as an understanding of issues and opposition the client faces

## **Points Off:**

I take 2 points off for each of the following:

- Grammatical, spelling or typographical errors
- AP Style errors
- Badly organized paragraphs
- Puffy language

I take 10 points off for:

- Misspellings of your client's name, or any proper name
- Missing citations
- Fact errors
- Using the wrong format
- Failing to include or address something I specifically request in an assignment
- Not using page numbers

Papers will receive an F if:

- They are late
- They don't include necessary citations