

# PUR 4100: Public Relations Writing

## Spring 2017 – Section 1A88

**Class Times:** Tuesday/Thursday, Periods 4 & 5 (10:40 am to 12:35 p.m.)

**Class Location:** Weimer 3028

*as of December 23, 2016 (subject to change)*

**Instructor:** Brad Horn

**Email:** [bradfordhorn@ufl.edu](mailto:bradfordhorn@ufl.edu)

**Office Phone:** (352) 846 – 1154, however, email is preferred for quickest response

**Office Location:** Weimer Hall G040


**Office Hours:** Tuesday from 1-3 p.m. and Thursday from 1-2 p.m. or by scheduled appointment.

**Appointments:** Please stop by during my office hours to discuss assignments, materials or other concerns related to the course. You may also schedule a meeting with me via email.

### 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). Graphic design knowledge is a plus.

### Required Texts:

- *Associated Press Stylebook, 2016* or digital subscription ([apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com))
- Wilcox, D. L. & Reber, B.H. (2016). *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques* (8<sup>th</sup> Edition), Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. 
- Additional readings will be assigned through Canvas throughout the semester

### Course Overview

Throughout this course, you will be expected to master core competencies of excellent writing for public relations and strategic communications. Becoming a stronger writer, while gaining confidence in your abilities, are expected outcomes of your efforts in this course. By the end of this semester, your work will provide you a portfolio of writing samples for a variety of mediums. Each week, you will write and rewrite weekly assignments, both in and out of class. This course is designed as a writing lab. Students need to bring laptops and any necessary portable storage devices to each class in order to work on assignments.

Writing clear, concise and persuasive messages while on deadline is an essential tool in becoming a public relations or communications professional. Thinking strategically, creatively and efficiently will be critical to your success in this course and beyond. Ultimately, your growth this semester will be centered on your learning goals and your willingness to grow. We will maintain an active dialogue throughout the course, through a combination of lecture, discussion and class labs. Each student is expected to contribute to the learning experience in providing feedback for your classmates, while incorporating lessons to grow your abilities. The final strategic communications plan project will feature elements of your individual assignments throughout the semester, including news releases, fact sheets, speeches and memos. From each assignment, you can build your final project, while incorporating feedback to help your growth.

Over the first week of the course, you will identify a client and issue that will serve as your subject for assignments throughout the semester. Please be sure to think extensively about both the client and public relations issue, and ultimately, try to choose based on a personal interest or passion for the subject. Your writing will reflect the energy and effort you have for the subject you choose. 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.

## **Course Objectives**

1. You will develop and create communication messages for public relations, public interest and strategic 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 become more confident in your abilities as a writer.
3. You will learn to write on deadline and be comfortable turning in assignments within a class period.
4. You will develop an understanding for the appropriate use of differing message styles, recognizing when to use different message types.
5. You will understand how becoming a stronger writer will make you a better overall communicator.
6. You will learn how to effectively rewrite, in order to make your messages stronger.
7. You will learn how to implement AP Style and write for your audience, not just for your client.
8. You will understand what messages resonate with audiences and how best to reach your objective.
9. You will learn how to limit overwriting and purge unnecessary words from your writing.

## **AP Style**

One of the keys to becoming an effective writer in public relations is to develop and understanding of, and to follow, AP style. ALL work for this course will be held to the standard of the Associated Press stylebook. You can either subscribe online (last listed price \$26 annually) or purchase the most recent version of the AP Stylebook. AP style will remain with you throughout your career. Writing that is consistent across platforms and audiences will determine your success, in this course and in your future. Factual and grammatical errors will not be tolerated. Your work will be deducted for errors and for misuse of AP style.

## **Plagiarism**

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. This includes lifting language from your client's existing messaging. Plagiarize, in any form, and you will fail this course. I cannot emphasize this enough. There is no excuse for stealing someone else's work. *Ever.*

## **Academic Honesty**

Creating original work is a requirement for this course. As you will choose a client and build messages for that client throughout the semester, you will be required to examine their existing messaging. You may be tempted to take content from your client's existing messages. *Don't do it!*

All messages you create for your client must be your own. Should you need to cite material from any source, you must use proper attribution. It is never permissible to use direct or paraphrased material from any source without attribution. You may not submit work you have done for an internship or for another class. All work must be original. Any academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University of Florida policies, specifically the UF Honor Code, and will result in a failing grade for this course.

## **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.

## **Help with Coping**

UF provides free resources for any student who may need assistance in managing stress. The UF Counseling and Wellness Center is located at 3190 Radio Road and open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through

Friday for emergency walk-ins. For appointments and further information, please call 352-392-1575.

### **Class Attendance Policy**

Missing class will result in deduction from your participation grade. Chronic absence will result in further discipline. As this course is designed to build on each assignment in creating a portfolio for your career, any absence from the class will put you behind. If you are absent from class, please consult a classmate to see what you missed. All assignments and schedule changes will be announced through Canvas. Please do not ask to review missed class material unless your absences were due to serious illness. University attendance policies can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

### **Course Professionalism**

As aspiring public relations professionals, your commitment to this course is reflected in a number of ways. I expect you to arrive willing to contribute to class discussions and build your writing capabilities each class. With that expectation, I request an adherence to standards you would find in the workplace to be reflected in our classroom, including, but not limited to, professional attire, display of courtesy to your teammates, and to represent yourself and your work with high levels of excellence. Specifically, I ask that you do the following in class each time we meet:

- 1) Use your laptops ONLY for assignments and note-taking. Please avoid texting and use of social media during class. It's obvious when you are doing it, and this course is for your benefit.
- 2) Follow current events, specifically related to your client, and come to class ready to discuss topics from a public relations management and writing standpoint.
- 3) Be respectful of all opinions offered during class. Separating public relations issues from politics and social perspectives can be difficult. We are here to grow and learn from each other in proposing solutions for specific issues. I ask that our classroom be a place of inclusion in topics and discussion.

Violations of these expectations may result in being asked to leave class and ultimately, a lower grade.

### **Format**

Understanding effective public relations writing strategies requires adherence to clarity and conciseness. Your writings must convey a persuasive message, must meet the needs of the specific audience and must articulate your desired intention. Coherent and logical writing is expected, along with adherence to editing and AP style. Misspellings, improper use of language and vague descriptions are not acceptable for an upper-level college writing course. Every assignment should be finalized and ready for presentation.

### **Participation**

A primary responsibility of each student will be to contribute to the discussion and through creative, strategic and insightful comments that benefit others. Participation in discussions carries a 10 percent cumulative score for your final grade, given at the discretion of the instructor. Even if you do not feel like you are ready to contribute to discussion, please do come to class, as the interaction with your classmates will certainly benefit your assignments. Come to class having read the assignment listed for that day.

### **On Deadline**

Please reach out with questions or concerns freely, but please do so 24 hours or more before an assignment is due. Please *think proactively* and *work ahead*, as I cannot guarantee a response when contacted less than 24 hours before your assignment due date.

### **Course Evaluations**

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/>.

### **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.**

### **Grading Scale**

Late assignments will not be accepted. Deadlines are, by nature, inflexible. Assignments turned in past deadline will result in a failing grade for the assignments. It is your responsibility to advise the instructor of any circumstances that prevent you from meeting a deadline.

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
- F 0-59 percent

### **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.

### **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.

### **Assignments and Submissions**

All writing assignments will be posted in Canvas, with all assignments due *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 lab days, the majority of class will be spent working on assignments listed. The following schedule serves as a guide for the semester, though dates and assignments are subject to change. All changes will be sent through Canvas as announcements.

### **Class Discussion and Assignment Schedule:**

**Week 1: Understanding Audience:** Course Overview, Writing Effectively, Choosing a Client

*Assignment Due: Client Selection*

**Week 2: Clients and Effective Messaging:** Creating a Client Proposal, Message Strategy

*Assignment Due: Client Proposal*

**Week 3: Message Strategy and Communications Plans:** Devising a Message Strategy

*Assignment Due: Message Strategy*

**Week 4: News Releases:** Writing the News Release, Preparing Advisories, Fact Sheets

*Assignment Due: News Release and Boilerplate*

**Week 5: Working with the Media: Relationships, Media Kits and Collateral**

*Assignment Due: Fact Sheet and Advisory*

**Week 6: Audits and Social Media: Communications Audits, Bloggers, Strategy**

*Assignment Due: Communications Audit*

**Week 7: Email and Business Writing**

*Assignment Due: Email Pitch Assignment*

**Week 8: Speeches**

*Assignment Due: Speech Memo, Q&A*

**Week 9: Speech Presentation**

*Assignment Due: Delivering Speeches*

*SPRING BREAK*

**Week 10: Multimedia and Creative**

*Assignment Due: Creative Brief*

**Week 11: Evaluation**

*Assignment Due: Measuring Desired Objectives*

**Week 12: Strategic Communications Plan**

**Week 13: Resume and Cover Letter**

*Assignment Due: Resume and Cover Letter*

**Week 14: Finalize Strategic Communications Plans**

**Week 15: Strategic Communications Plan Presentations**

*Assignment Due: Final Strategic Communications Plan, Client Presentations*

