

Updated August 9, 2017

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

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

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 also 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, 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. Not 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 and time.

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 Clients and their Audiences	August 21 Course Overview and Philosophy How to win at writing Class discussion: Choosing a client Client selection assignment distributed	August 23 NO CLASS MEETING .
Week 2 Business Letters and Proposals	August 28 Assignment 1 Due: Completed client selection form. Bring printout to class Class Discussion: <i>Creating a client proposal</i> Class Lab: Begin writing client proposal Client Proposal assignment distributed	August 30 Class Discussion: <i>Know Your Audience, Message Strategy and Storytelling</i> Message strategy assignment distributed Guest Speaker: Annie Neimand: The Science of Your Audience (11:30)
Week 3 Message Strategy and Storytelling	September 4 NO CLASS MEETING— Labor Day	September 6 Project 1 Due: Client Proposal Class Discussion: <i>News Releases, Pitch Memos,</i>

		<i>Statements, and Advisories</i> News release and boilerplate assignment distributed
Week 4 Working with the News Media	September 11 Class Lab: News release and boilerplate Assignment 2 Due: Message Strategy Guest Coach: Steve Orlando (invited) .	September 13 NO CLASS MEETING Assignment 3 Due: News release and boilerplate .
Week 5 Working with the News Media Creating Media Lists	September 18 Class Discussion: <i>Creating media lists</i> Media list assignment distributed Class Lab: Creating media lists	September 20 Assignment 4 Due: Media List Class Discussion: <i>Conducting an environmental scan</i>
Week 6 Social Media Audits and Strategy	September 25 One-on-one meetings (Sign-up sheet will be posted on Canvas) .	September 27 One-on-one meetings (Sign-up sheet will be posted on Canvas) .
Week 7 Fact Sheets	October 2 Assignment 5 Due: Environmental Scan Class Discussion: <i>Writing one pagers and fact sheets</i>	October 4 Class Lab: One pagers and fact sheets

<p>Week 8</p> <p>Speechwriting</p>	<p>October 9</p> <p>Assignment 6 Due: Fact Sheet</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Writing for verbal communication: speeches, background memos and Q & A</i></p> <p>Guest Speaker: Aaron Hoover</p> <p>Class time to work with speech partner</p> <p>Speech assignment distributed</p>	<p>October 11</p> <p>Class Lab: Speechwriting and Q & A Memo</p>
<p>Week 9</p> <p>Presenting</p>	<p>October 16</p> <p>Project 2 Due: Five-minute speech, Q & A and speech memo.</p> <p>Speech presentations</p>	<p>October 18</p> <p>Speech presentations</p>
<p>Week 10</p> <p>Collateral and Creative Briefs</p>	<p>October 23</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Using collateral, creating a creative brief</i></p> <p>Guest Speaker: Benny Torres</p>	<p>October 25</p> <p>Class Lab: Writing the creative brief</p>
<p>Week 11</p> <p>Creating a Strategic Communications Plan</p>	<p>October 30</p> <p>Assignment 7 Due: Creative Brief</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Beginning the strategic communications plan. The significance of a strategic</i></p>	<p>November 1</p> <p>Class Lab: Developing your strategic communications plan: Audience definition and research</p>

	<i>communications plan, what it is, why we create one.</i>	
Week 12 Creating a Strategic Communications Plan	November 6 Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Setting measurable goals</i>	November 8 Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Defining the relevant context and putting your environmental scan to work</i>
Week 13 Creating a Strategic Communications Plan	November 13 Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Creating budgets and timelines</i> Guest Speaker: Ellen Nodine	November 15 Class discussion: <i>Bios, cover letters, resumes and thank you notes</i> Class work and critique time
Week 14 Creating Your Strategic Communications Plan	November 20 Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Evaluating future opportunities</i>	November 22 NO CLASS
Week 15 One-on-one Meetings	November 27 One-on-one meetings to discuss strategic communications plan	November 29 One-on-one meetings to discuss strategic communications plan .
Week 16 Finalizing the Strategic Communications Plan	December 4 Assignment 8 Due: Bios, Resumes and Cover Letters Class Discussion: <i>Class critique of cover letter, bios and resumes</i>	December 6 Final Communications Plan Due Assignment 9 will be completed in class

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
- Clearly support arguments with research

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