PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING

INSTRUCTOR: Robert (Rob) Engle; rengle@jou.ufl.edu

OFFICE HOURS: Contact me by email anytime by email.

REQUIRED TEXT: All readings are assigned (check course website) and AP Stylebook

COURSE PREREQUISITE:

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).

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW:

The goal of this course is to equip students with the essential skills for developing and writing public relations materials as PR practitioners. Writing effectively in the variety of PR formats is expected and desired by employers.

Using current events and topics, we will cover all areas of public relations writing, including press releases, backgrounders, bios, and press advisories. We will also cover recent technological changes such as the growth of blogging and social media, providing an understanding of how technology impacts the public relations industry.

In addition, the course will include strategic communication plans, media relations, crisis communication, proposal writing, and speechwriting.

COURSE FORMAT:

For this semester, there are 12 modules. Most weeks will have a writing assignment; three weeks will have quizzes. Participating on the course discussion board will be part of your grade.

All lectures, assignments, discussion items, readings, samples and other instructions are on the course website.

GRADING POLICY:

• Writing Assignments, graded on a 100 point scale - 75 percent

• Quizzes - 10 percent

• Participation on course discussion board - 15 percent

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A   94-100 percent
A- 90-93.99
B+ 87-89.99
B   83-86.99
B- 80-82.99
C+ 77-79.99
C   73-76.99
C- 70-72.99
D+ 67-69.99
D   63-66.99
D- 60-62.99
E   0-59.99 percent

ASSIGNMENT, QUIZ, AND DISCUSSION POLICIES

All assignments and quizzes (open notes) are due 11:59 p.m. Sunday on the week of the module -- check assignments and due dates on course website. I will have assignments returned by Thursday of the following week.

You must submit discussion items, at least three to four sentences, by Thursday at 11:59 p.m. of the module week and respond to two student submissions by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

Use AP Stylebook for all writing assignments. If you don't have it, the AP Stylebook can be purchased in hardback or online (https://www.apstylebook.com/ online/).

Attendance and Late Work Policies:

As part of being successful communication industry practitioners, meeting deadlines is critical, so: **No assignments, quizzes or discussion posts will be accepted after due date - and don't ask.**

Because this is an online, asynchronously delivered course, attendance in the form of calling roll will not occur; however, students are expected to sign onto the course site at least once each day to check for course updates in the announcements and discussion sections of the site.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Modules:

1. Welcome, Course Overview
2. The Press Release (Part I)
3. The Press Release (Part II)
4. Press Backgrounder
5. Fact Sheet
6. Bios
7. The Press Kit and Cover/Pitch Letters and Emails
8. Communication Plans
9. Working with Journalists and Editors
10. Social Media Writing
11. Press Advisories
12. Speechwriting

Weekly Discussions – Details:

Discussion Boards are a key part of this online course. Review all module content prior to posting. Then familiarize yourself with the discussion board scenario/question and post your initial discussion item. You are also required to read all and comment on a minimum of two student posts (per discussion board). You must post your initial post before you respond to your classmates contributions. You will not be able to edit your post, so take time to ensure your post is complete for submission before you officially post.

Discussion Boards will be graded on the following criteria:
Content, Contribution of Original Thought, Connection to Course Material, Spelling and Grammar, and Deadline.

Deadline: First post (addressing the instructor posed questions) will be submitted by **THURSDAY** at 11:59 p.m (ET) and the minimum **two** meaningful responses are submitted before **SUNDAY** at 11:59 (ET).

Discussion Board Grading Rubric: Your discussion grades are two parts: 50 total points for your initial post, 50 points for your responses. Both initial post and responses will be graded on the same criteria.

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Less than satisfactory	Points

Content	Post is appropriate length and includes one original and two reply posts to stimulate further discussion. Information clearly relates to the main topic. Includes supporting links and/or examples.	Post and responses are appropriate length, but ideas developed for discussion are minimal or vaguely developed. Information marginally relates to the main topic. No links and/or examples are given.	Post is short, does not address topic, and/ or does not develop ideas. - OR – Responses have little or nothing to do with the topic and/or are missing.	25
Contribution of original thought	Contribution is thoughtful, analytical, and original.	Contribution shows adequate evidence of original thought, but lacks real insight or analysis.	Contribution relies on others' posts or lacks original insight into/ shows little understanding of the questions asked.	25
Post connects to course materials	Author makes connections between course content and personal reflection, current events, etc.	Author makes some connections between course content and personal reflection or current events, but connections are not sufficient or clearly explained.	Author does not connect course content to personal reflection or current events.	25
Spelling and Grammar	Precise syntax and superior usage of grammar, punctuation and spelling result in a coherent and intelligible response.	Syntax is clear and the relatively few grammar, punctuation or spelling errors do not impede understanding.	Syntax is sometimes garbled and errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling disrupt understanding.	25
			Total points	100

Assignments - Details:

Writing Assignments - We will be using the University of Florida's Brazilian Music Institute (BMI) for the press release, fact sheet, backgrounder, bio, pitch letter, social media, and press advisory assignments, as well as a speech writing assignment.

All assignments are due SUNDAY 11:59 p.m. (ET) on week of the module.
Check the assignment details and due dates in Canvas. I will have graded assign-

ments returned by Thursday of the following week. Comments and edits will be on attached versions of your assignments and/or on the Grade/Comment page on Canvas.

Your writing assignments will be graded on the following criteria: **Topic, Presentation, Writing, and Research & Sourcing. Writing Assignment Grading Rubric:**

Criteria	100-90 Excellent	89-80 Good	Less than 80, Less than satisfactory	Points
Topic	Assignment describes, contextualizes, and conceptualizes topic and subject matter in an excellent manner.	Assignment adequately covers topic and subject matter but lacks depth and insight.	Assignment information inadequately covers and misses the point of topic and subject matter.	**25 points**
Presentation	Message is engaging, compelling, attention getting, comprehensive and easily understandable. The presentation follows style and formatting instructions in lecture PDFs, writing samples, videos and readings. Presents ideas, thoughts, and concepts in a cogent and organized manner.	Message made an adequate presentation, but additional effort is needed to make the work more compelling, attention getting and engaging. Piece has some style and formatting issues and needs tighter organization and structure.	Presentation is not compelling, attention getting or engaging. It has many style and formatting issues and concepts and ideas are presented in a disorganized and incoherent manner.	**25 points**
Writing	Assignment contains excellent grammar, spelling, punctuation and syntax. Includes descriptive and persuasive language. Piece is factually accurate and utilizes AP style. Ideas, thoughts, and messages are superbly conveyed in the written word. Lead includes the five Ws.	Syntax is clear and the relatively few grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors to not impede understanding. Lead is adequate, but piece has some AP style issues.	Syntax is sometimes garbled and errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling disrupt understanding. Piece has numerous AP style errors and lead is unclear and uninteresting.	**25 points**

Research & Sourcing	Assignment demonstrates excellent research and sourcing, and provides attribution and links to websites and other sources when needed.	Assignment demonstrates adequate research and sourcing, but additional attribution may be needed. Links to websites and other sources are provided in an adequate manner.	Adequate research, sourcing, attribution is minimal or missing. No links to website and other sources are provided.	**25 points**
			Total points	**100**

Quizzes:

Quizzes will be on lectures, readings, and videos. Quizzes will be eight questions and open book/notes. You will have the whole module week to complete.

Weekly Lectures:

A lecture video will be posted to the course website on Canvas for the 12 weeks. These videos will vary in length depending on the material. It is your responsibility to watch each of the videos. Although it is possible to watch the pre-recorded video lectures at any time and at any pace, keeping up with the videos week to week according to the schedule will be easier as many build off the other along with the weekly readings.

University Policies:

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities: Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Students with Disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. DRC is located in room 001 in Reid Hall or you can contact them by phone at 352-392-8565. University counseling services and mental health services:

**Netiquette: Communication Courtesy:

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf

Class Demeanor:

Mastery in this class requires preparation, passion, and professionalism. Students are expected, within the requirements allowed by university policy, to attend class, be on time, and meet all deadlines. Work assigned in advance of class should be completed as directed. Full participation in online and live discussions, group projects, and small group activities is expected.

My role as instructor is to identify critical issues related to the course, direct you to and teach relevant information, assign appropriate learning activities, create opportunities for assessing your performance, and communicate the outcomes of such assessments in a timely, informative, and professional way. Feedback is essential for you to have confidence that you have mastered the material and for me to determine that you are meeting all course requirements.

At all times it is expected that you will welcome and respond professionally to assessment feedback, that you will treat your fellow students and me with respect, and that you will contribute to the success of the class as best as you can.

Getting Help:

For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml
    ***Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Other resources are available at http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cw-cDefault.aspx
- 352-392-1575
- Disability resources
- Library
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please visit http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints to submit a complaint.

Course Evaluation: 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

University Policy on Academic Misconduct:

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:
Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."

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."

For more information about academic honesty, contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1261.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All graduate students in the College of Journalism and Communications are expected to conduct themselves with the highest degree of integrity. It is the students' responsibility to ensure that they know and understand the requirements of every assignment. At a minimum, this includes avoiding the following:

Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when an individual presents the ideas or expressions of another as his or her own. Students must always credit others' ideas with accurate citations and must use quotation marks and citations when presenting the words of others. A thorough understanding of plagiarism is a precondition for admittance to graduate studies in the college.

Cheating: Cheating occurs when a student circumvents or ignores the rules that govern an academic assignment such as an exam or class paper. It can include using notes, in physical or electronic form, in an exam, submitting the work of another as one's own, or reusing a paper a student has composed for one class in another class. If a student is not sure about the rules that govern an assignment, it is the student's responsibility to ask for clarification from his instructor.

Misrepresenting Research Data: The integrity of data in mass communication research is a paramount issue for advancing knowledge and the credibility of our professions. For this reason any intentional 14 misrepresentation of data, or misrepresentation of the conditions or circumstances of data collection, is considered a violation of academic integrity. Misrepresenting data is a clear violation of the rules and requirements of academic integrity and honesty.

Any violation of the above stated conditions is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program and will result in revocation of the degree if the degree previously has been awarded.

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Florida Code of Conduct

https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code

Disclaimer:

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.