University of Florida
Department of Public Relations
College of Journalism and Communications
Public Relations Writing
Fall 2025
PUR 4100,
Sections: 1ONL(28157) & 1UFO (28156) Combined
Asynchronous (AKA)
Classes: Aug. 21 – Dec. 3
Instructor: Lawrence M. Clark, MBA
Office hours: By appointment via Zoom
larry.clark@ufl.edu
305-450-1744

Course Description

In this course, you will develop the writing and editing skills necessary to succeed in a public relations career. You will also learn to think critically about current events and how they relate to public relations practice.

According to public relations professionals, two of the most desired traits in new hires are a good business sense (including critical thinking) and excellent writing skills. Thus, practitioners must be polished and capable writers, skilled in diverse forms and styles of writing, and capable of working quickly to meet deadlines. This course is an intensive workshop in persuasive public relations writing that will simulate the realities of the professional writing environment for a public relations professional.

College of Journalism and Mass Communications Objectives
The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:
• apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located;

• demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
• demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts;
• present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies;
• write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
• demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
• apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
• effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
• critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
• apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Course Goals

Students will master the basic writing skills of public relations professionals to prepare them to meet the demands of today's industry. Upon completing this class, students will learn to:
• Recognize the importance of excellent writing for success in both the public relations profession and day-to-day business• 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;
• Explain the purpose of such public relations materials and decide when and how to strategically use these;
• 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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

SUGGESTED TEXTBOOKS
The Associated Press Stylebook 2018 and Briefing on Media Law. The Associated Press, 2018. (ISBN: 0917360672) or the online subscription. You can access the AP Stylebook online through the UF Library.

Strunk, William, and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed., Pearson, 2014. (ISBN:020530902X)

Additional Readings as Assigned
Students are expected to regularly read industry news, examples include: PRWeek, PRovoke, IPR Research Letter, and PRNEWS.

Additional readings may be assigned over the semester.

COURSE POLICIES
Instructor Interaction:
The best way to reach me is by e-mail. I check my e-mail account regularly, but please do not expect a response by e-mail after normal business hours/over the weekend. If I have not written back within 24 hours, please send your email again. As my email is considered a state public record, I do not discuss grades or any student records issues via e-mail. Please schedule a meeting with me to discuss these issues.

In an emergency, you may text me; but, identify yourself as my student in the text, or I will ignore and delete it.

Late or Missed Work:
Deadlines for each assignment will be given and students are expected to meet them. Late assignments will automatically lose a full letter grade for each week it is late (e.g. B to a C). Some consideration, however, might be given (at the discretion of the instructor) if there are extenuating circumstances such as prolonged hospitalization, family death, or extended individual sickness; however, you need to notify me before the deadline is missed, not after the fact.

Email Policy:
As a state employee, my email is considered a public record, and can be requested via an open-records request. Because of this, you should not email things that you would be uncomfortable with anyone else reading (personal information, information about grades, etc.). In general, face-to-face meetings tend to take less time, and result in less confusion than emailed conversations. While you are welcome to email me, I may indicate that you need an in- person meeting depending on the complexity of the issue. Also, please be aware that email is considered formal communication, and it is important to practice professionalism. Make sure that you do not treat email as text (i.e., don't use text abbreviations) and never email something that you would not say to your boss' face.

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

honesty 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 Student Honor Code and 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 me.

I will document and report all honor code violations, including cheating and plagiarism. The minimum penalty for a violation of the honor code is a zero on the assignment or exam but may be higher depending on the severity of the violation.

Professionalism:
As PR students I expect you to maintain a high level of professionalism in all of our interactions. This includes being courteous and respectful to all members of the course.

Students Requiring Accommodations:
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

PR DEPARTMENT AI PRINCIPLES
1. Ultimately, you are here to learn how to be a communications professional, which means you need to learn the basics of writing and creative thinking and be able to execute those skills on your own.
2. AI can be useful to help and refine, but ultimately the work needs to be your own.
  a. If AI wrote your assignment, that is not your own work
  b. It's best as a brainstorming tool
3. You need to be transparent when AI is used.
  a. Each assignment will state if AI use is allowed or not, and if allowed how
   documentation needs to take place
4. When you use AI, use it creatively.
  a. Be thoughtful with your prompts
  b. Use multiple prompts
5. FACT CHECK
  a. Do not trust anything that is created without checking anything it produces

AI Policy
In this course you may be asked to use generative AI for some assignments. AI is commonly used in the profession, so familiarity with generative AI tools is important. However, do not let your creative thinking and editing skills lapse! When AI is allowed or encouraged in assignments, you will need to document how AI was used. This could include providing your

prompts, showing the editing that you did to the created content, or using appropriate citation of information obtained via generative AI. If you are using AI when not explicitly allowed, that is considered a violation of the honor code as you are presenting content as your own that was not fully created by you. There are various AI detection tools available (built within Canvas and externally such as ZeroGPT), and many AI platforms follow very formulaic response patterns. If I am concerned that your work is not your own, I will try to verify the originality of your work. If unable to do so, I may ask you to resubmit the assignment detailing how you arrived at your submission.

GRADING POLICY
I will be as fair and impartial as is humanly possible in the grading process. Each of you will be graded on the same criteria. Because of this, no extra work or special assignments will be given. Grades are earned; they are not gifts. Grades are awarded on the basis of quality, not the amount of time expended. I will keep grades posted on Canvas — it is your responsibility to check on your progress throughout the semester.
Grade components for the class are as follows:

Writing Assignments (60 percent) – You will be graded on several writing assignments. For select assignments, you will submit the 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 "on deadline" and due in class, simulating industry demands.

Final Project (20 percent) – This is your final project for the course, which will serve as a compilation of much of your work throughout the semester. If you received a low score on any of your assignments, this is your opportunity to revise accordingly. I'm available answer any questions and provide guidance.

Quizzes (20 percent) – Quizzes will be given throughout the semester. I will let you know which topics will be covered on each quiz. You will be expected to know topics from previous quizzes.

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 your instructor. Everything you write for this course must be coherent, logical and carefully edited. Fact errors, misspellings, and syntax and grammatical errors are unacceptable, especially in work by public relations students and will greatly affect your grade. AP Style guidelines must be followed for all materials. All work should be uploaded on Canvas.

You can earn up to three additional points per assignment if you also include an "email" to your client in the comments section of your submission. This mimics how you will submit materials to your clients for review in the workplace. I will share best practices for submissions in the first weeks of the course.

Public relations professionals are often bound by tight, important deadlines and missing these can damage their and their clients' credibility.

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.

The grading scale for the course is:

A	94.0 – 100%	B	84.0 – 86.99%	C	74.0 – 76.99%	D	64.0 – 66.99%
A-	90 – 93.99%	B-	80.0 – 83.99%	C-	70.0 – 73.99%	D-	60.0 – 63.99%
B+	87.0 – 89.99%	C+	77.0 – 79.99%	D+	67.0 – 69.99%	E	Below 60%

See the current UF Grading Policies for more information.

COURSE SCHEDULE
Course Overview

Module 1	Foundations of PR Writing
Module 2	Writing Effective Press Releases
Module 3	Media Relations
Module 4	Executive Communications and Briefing Documents
Module 5	Strategic Message Development with Key Messages
Module 6	Opinion Writing and Brand Voice
Module 7	AI Tools and Prompt Engineering for PR
Module 8	Research Communications in PR
Module 9	Speechwriting Fundamentals
Module 10	Social Media Writing and Influencer Content Strategy
Module 11	Crisis Communications Management
Module 12	PR Project Management

Module 13	Professional Development in PR

UF POLICIES

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals. 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/ .

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see:
http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html

Recording of Lectures

"Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture **does not** include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code."

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.
GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including
Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.
ACADEMIC RESOURCES
E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk 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.

PRIVACY AND ACCESSIBILITY POLICIES

For information about the privacy policies of the tools used in this course, see the links below:

• Instructure (Canvas) o Instructure Privacy Policy o Instructure Accessibility

• Microsoft o Microsoft Privacy Policy o Microsoft Accessibility

• Sonic Foundry (Mediasite Streaming Video Player) o Sonic Foundry Privacy Policy o Sonic Foundry Accessibility

• Vimeo

o Vimeo Privacy Policy o Vimeo Accessibility

• YouTube (Google) o YouTube (Google) Privacy Policy

o YouTube (Google) Accessibility

o Zoom Privacy Policy o Zoom Accessibility