

PUR4100 – Public Relations Writing – Fall 2025

CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor: Ophir Leheavy, MA, MAT

Email: olehavy@jou.ufl.edu

Office: Virtual

Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom

Please email me at olehavy@jou.ufl.edu if you have any questions. I will respond within 24 hours, Monday through Friday.

Course Description and Prerequisites

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Public relations professionals must be strong, polished writers who can work quickly and adapt to changing environments and needs. Students must recognize the importance of excellent writing for success in both the public relations profession and day-to-day business. In this course, you will master the core qualities of excellent public relations writing and develop the skills to build communications materials for real clients.

This course is centered on you and your needs. As such, the course will provide the opportunity for hands-on learning and real-world applications to help you gain experience and build a robust portfolio that showcases your strategic writing skills.

PREREQUISITES:

- To enroll in this course, you must have completed and received a grade of C or better in PUR3000 (Principles of Public Relations) and JOU3101 (Reporting).
- Sophomore standing

Course-Learning Objectives

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
- 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.

College of Journalism and 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 Professionalism Statement

Your experience in this class is important to me. As PR students, I expect you to maintain a high level of professionalism in all our interactions. This includes being courteous and respectful to all members of the course. It is my intent that students be well-served by this course and to do this, we must practice mutual respect where all members of the class feel safe and heard.

Suggested Textbooks

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, PProvoke, IPR Research Letter, and PRNEWS.

Additional readings may be assigned over the semester.

Course Policies

This course is fully online; you must log in to Canvas with your Gatorlink username and password to access the materials and assignments. The course is organized into modules with due dates. Unless otherwise specified, each module begins on Monday at 12:00 AM ET and ends on Sunday at 11:59 PM ET.

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.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

I believe professionals should be treated like adults because we *are* adults. The same is true of UF students. Life happens, and if anyone understands that it's this professor! However, in your professional career, consistently missing or arriving late to or leaving early from work, meetings or client events will reflect poorly on your professionalism and commitment. As such, the same will be applied to our class. I recommend logging into Canvas every day to stay up to date on matters related to the course such as announcements. Logging in and turning in your assignments on time is showing up in the online learning world!

Late or missed work.

Deadlines are provided for each assignment, and students are expected to meet them. Late assignments will follow the policy below. 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.**

1. Late Assignment Grade Reductions
 - a. 0-24 Hours Late: 10% reduction in grade.
 - b. Over 24 Hours (24 hours and 1 minute) to 7 Calendar Days Late: 20% reduction in grade.
 - c. After the 7th Calendar Day: Work will not be accepted.
2. Late Discussions will not be accepted.

ASSIGNMENT FEEDBACK POLICY

I will provide feedback/grades on submitted assignments within two weeks of the due date. Some assignments may require a longer review period, which I will communicate to you if necessary.

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.

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

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.

- AI can be useful to help and refine, but ultimately the work needs to be your own. If AI wrote your assignment, that is not your own work.
- It's best as a brainstorming tool.
- You need to be transparent when AI is used. Each assignment will state if AI use is allowed or not, and if allowed how documentation needs to take place.
- When you use AI, use it creatively. Be thoughtful with your prompts.
- Use multiple prompts.
- FACT CHECK 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 based on quality, not the amount of time spent. I will keep grades posted on Canvas - it is your responsibility to check on your progress throughout the semester.

The 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. You may reach out to me via email to schedule a meeting if you have any questions and would like 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, syntax and grammatical errors are unacceptable, especially in work by public relations students, and will greatly affect your grade. AP Style guidelines should 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 the 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. Please back up all your files; you may choose to do so on a USB flash drive, Google Drive, iCloud, Dropbox, etc.

Grade	Percentage
A	94-100%
A-	90.0 – 93.99%

B+	87.0 – 89.99%
B	84.0 – 86.99%
B-	80.0 – 83.99%
C+	77.0 –79.99%
C	74.0 –76.99%
C-	70.0 –73.99%
D+	67.0 – 69.99%
D	64.0 – 66.99%
D-	60.0 – 63.99%
E	below 60%

See the current [UF Grading Policies](#) for more information.

Course Schedule

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

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

This course follows all UF academic policies. You may access these policies via [this link](#).

PRIVACY AND ACCESSIBILITY POLICIES

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

- Instructure (Canvas)
 - [Instructure Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Instructure Accessibility](#)
- Microsoft Microsoft
 - [Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Microsoft Accessibility](#)
- Sonic Foundry (Mediasite Streaming Video Player)
 - [Sonic Foundry Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Sonic Foundry Accessibility](#)
- Vimeo
 - [Vimeo Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Vimeo Accessibility](#)
- YouTube (Google)
 - [YouTube \(Google\) Privacy Policy](#)
 - [YouTube \(Google\) Accessibility](#)
- Zoom
 - [Zoom Privacy Policy](#)
 - [Zoom Accessibility](#)