



PUR4100: Public Relations Writing

(Section 1557)

Spring 2026

Instructor: Chrissy Cruz, M.A., M.Ed., Ed.S.

Location: Weimer 2050

Class Times: Tuesdays, in person, 5:10p.m.- 7:05p.m.; Thursdays, over Zoom 5:10p.m.- 7:05p.m.

Email: ChrissyCruz@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:00p.m.- 3:00p.m. over Zoom and by appointment

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).

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.

Course 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 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.

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 Requirements:

Suggested Textbooks:

Fields, Valerie. *Public Relations Writing, Essential Tools for Effective Storytelling*. Sage, 2025. (ISBN: 978-1-0718-5646-8)

The Associated Press Stylebook. The Associated Press, 2024. (ISBN: 978-0-917360-71-8) 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: 978-0-205-30902-3). You can access The Elements of Style online through the UF Library.

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 Canvas inbox message. 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.

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). Keep in mind an assignment turned in even 10 minutes late is considered late. 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.

Attendance:

I expect you to attend each class meeting, but we will not have an attendance requirement. Staying on top of the weekly materials and assignments is essential, and trust me, this class is much easier to understand and keep up with if you attend class. Note that we will have in-class assignments, and if you are not in class to complete them you will receive a zero. Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course follow UF policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

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 our interactions. This includes being courteous and respectful to all members of the course. Being respectful includes making sure you are not distracting to others via your cell phone or computer usage, talking with others during lecture, or arriving or leaving late – practice your professionalism now.

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 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:

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. Grades are awarded based on 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 (40 percent) – You will be graded on several writing assignments. For select assignments, you will submit the first draft (or 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.

Media Kit 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 during office hours, one-on-one meetings and working days to answer any questions and provide guidance.

In-Class Presentations (10 percent):

Speech – You and your partner will write a speech for your client. One of you will serve as your client’s “spokesperson” and will deliver the speech to the class. You and your partner will share the same grade for this assignment.

Mock Interview Presentation – You and your partner will write an interview brief, including potential Q&A from media about your campaign and client. You will do a mock interview in class, where one of you will act as the spokesperson and the other will act as the journalist. You and your partner will share the same grade for this assignment, too.

Exam (20 percent) – The exam date will be announced in Canvas.

Quizzes (10 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 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 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.

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-	90.0 – 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:

Week	Dates	Content
1	Tuesday, 01/13/26 – In Person Thursday, 01/15/26 – Zoom	Module 1: Course Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction and Expectations
2	Tuesday, 01/20/26 – In Person Thursday, 01/22/26 – Zoom	Module 2: Getting Organized for Writing and Persuasive Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Importance of accurate grammar, spelling, facts, AP style• Reporting vs writing for PR• Professional bios/LinkedIn profile• Using AI to edit your work
3	Tuesday, 01/27/26 – In Person Thursday, 01/29/26 – Zoom	Module 3: Business Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Importance of professional emails and memos

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client correspondence and POVs • Understanding the difference between internal and external communications
4	Tuesday, 02/03/26 – In Person Thursday, 02/05/26 – Zoom	Module 4: Research and Planning, Key Audiences, AP Style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP style and grammar review • Writing key messages for target audiences • Entry-level research assignments
5	Tuesday, 02/10/26 – In Person Thursday, 02/12/26 – Zoom	Module 5: External Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications audit of your selected company – look at their public facing material (website, newsletters/magazines, social media) What is working and what can be improved? • Draft a customer-facing blog post for your selected company
6	Tuesday, 02/17/26 – In Person Thursday, 02/19/26 – Zoom	Module 6: Understanding the media, what's newsworthy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify five newsworthy topics for your selected company. Create a key message for each and identify the target audience for each message. What tactics would you use to communicate your messages?
7	Tuesday, 02/24/26 – In Person Thursday, 02/26/26 – Zoom	Module 7: Writing for the Media: Pitch Letters and Media Lists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write three different pitches, aimed at three different media targets. Research the intended reporters and bloggers and include a targeted media list. • Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds • Discussion on importance of multimedia assets
8	Tuesday, 03/03/26 – In Person Thursday, 03/05/26 – Zoom	Module 8: Writing for the Media: News Releases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write two news releases, using different angles, identifying target audiences and media. Use proper formatting and make sure each release includes at least one quote from an executive and the company's boiler.
9	Tuesday, 03/10/26 – In Person Thursday, 03/12/26 – Zoom	Module 9: Writing for the Media: Fact Sheets, FAQs and Media Advisories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an FAQ or Fact Sheet about your

		company's product or services. Timed writing assignment: prepare a media advisory
10	Spring Break– No Classes Tuesday, 03/17/26 – No Class Thursday, 03/19/26 – No Class	Module 10: Spring Break – No Classes
11	Tuesday, 03/24/26 – In Person Thursday, 03/26/26 – Zoom	Module 11: Writing for the Media: Interview Prep Documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You and a partner will assume you have landed a coveted interview for a client. You will prepare an interview brief, including potential Q&A and background on the reporter. You will do the mock interview in class, where one of you will act as the spokesperson and the other will act as the journalist.
12	Tuesday, 03/31/26 – In Person Thursday, 04/02/26 – Zoom	Module 12: Social Media Writing and Influencers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn how to write social media posts for clients and conduct outreach to social media influencers.
13	Tuesday, 04/07/26 – In Person Thursday, 04/09/26 – Zoom	Module 13: Speech Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You and a partner will create a speech for a client. One of you will serve as the client's "spokesperson" and will deliver the speech to the class. You and your partner will share the same grade for this assignment.
14	Tuesday, 04/14/26 – In Person Thursday, 04/16/26 – Zoom	Module 14: Speech Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exam Review
15	Tuesday, 04/21/26 – In Person Thursday, 04/23/26 – Reading Day No Class	Module 15: Final Exam Preparation
16	Wednesday, 04/29/26 – In Person @ 8:00 PM - 10:00 PM	Module 16: Final Exam <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Exam is April 29, 2026 Media kit due April 29, 2026

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>

In-Class Recording:

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 Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, July 28th, 2021, 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.