

**Course: PUR 4100 Section 1557**  
**Public Relations Writing**  
**Times: TuTh 11:45 am – 1:40 pm (5, 6)**  
**Location: Weimer 3028**

**Instructor: Vicki Gervickas, PR professional**  
**[email: vgervickas@ufl.edu](mailto:vgervickas@ufl.edu)**  
**Office: Weimer 3059**  
**Office Hours: after class and by appointment**

Description:

This course is designed to provide you with an introduction to planning, composing and creating a public relations proposal for an actual client in the community. You will learn to assess a client's needs, propose a solution to a need and generate the PR documents that support that solution. Particular documents covered include traditional media such as backgrounders, fact sheets, news releases, brochures, position papers, as well as digital media and event planning.

Prerequisites:

To enroll in this course, you must have received a grade of C or better in PUR 3000 (Principles of Public Relations) and JOU 3101 (Reporting). Familiarity with visual design is helpful as well, but not necessary.

Required Materials:

Wilcox, Dennis L. and Reber, Bryan H, Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques, Pearson Education, latest edition. Available at UF Bookstore.

Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual, (a recent edition). Available at UF Bookstore.

Supplemental readings may be supplied or read online throughout the course.

Please purchase a reliable external drive to save your work on during the semester. The hard drives on the computers in the lab are not dependable. Bring your drive to each class meeting.

Objectives:

After successfully completing this course, you should:

- a. Have an understanding of how to create public relations plans and documents for strategic communication purposes.
- b. Be proficient in writing for an array of public relations purposes and audiences.
- c. Have developed a professional portfolio.

Strategy:

This course is very learner-friendly: our class times will center on class discussion and hands-on instruction to allow you to fully engage in the learning process. We will not follow the book's readings word for word, but instead, we will use them to understand pertinent concepts within PR writing. As your instructor, I will use PowerPoint presentations to present the key ideas from your readings and I will also require your input and insight into the various topics we will discuss. Everything you learn in this course will build upon itself and will culminate in a final project to strengthen your professional portfolio.

## Grading:

Final grades will be based on the following 100-point scale (note that plusses or minuses will not be used on final grades):

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-69 = D

0-59 = E

## Semester Assignments:

*Final Client Public Relations Plan* = 50 percent

More information about this assignment is to come. This project is a culmination of all your work in this class, and will be a professionally created document suitable for use by your client and in your portfolio.

*Writing Assignment Sets* = 40 percent

Two sets of writing assignments (counting for 20 percent each), which are the ‘rough drafts’ for your final project.

*Attendance, Class Exercises, Participation* = 10 percent

Because this is a learner-centered course, your attendance and participation in class discussions and exercises is essential. My role in this course is as a collaborator. Therefore, you must speak up. You can only earn full credit if you talk consistently, contribute to the class and follow-up on the feedback given to you with your written assignments. If you are not comfortable speaking in class, you may email me your contributions (though do not flood me with emails the final week of the session—this option will only count if you use it consistently throughout the course). Keeping up with the required readings will make your contributions in this area more meaningful. Because the discussion can sometimes become passionate, please remember to be courteous in your exchanges with others.

*Exams* = None (yippee!)

## Makeup & Late Work:

Reputations are made on the ability to meet deadlines. As such, makeup assignments cannot be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with me. Late work will be reduced one grade for each 24 hour period it is not turned in.

## A Word about Mechanics & Fact Errors:

Because this is a technical writing course as much as anything else, strong mechanics are expected. Unless otherwise specified, WE WILL USE AP STYLE ON ALL ASSIGNMENTS. Do not assume you will remember everything from earlier courses. Pull out your style books now and begin reviewing. This is required not to torture you, but to help you prepare for what is expected of you in a professional setting.

Any paper containing a major factual error will receive a “50” grade. A major factual error is defined as one that gives the wrong information to the audience, including such things as misspelling the client’s name,

incorrect identification of key sources, or having the wrong place and time for an upcoming event. Errors that do a minor disservice to the reader, such as incorrect time or place for a past event, will be graded somewhat more lenient, but remember CHECK YOUR FACTS AND MAKE SURE THEY ARE RIGHT TO AVOID ANY AND ALL GRADE DEDUCTIONS.

### A Word about Paraphrasing:

Some of the assignments used in class will be drawn from hypothetical or existing situations. For example, you might be given a fact sheet and then asked to write a news release based on the presented information. In these cases, it is crucial that you DO NOT COPY the text given word-for-word. Instead, you should paraphrase and attribute sources when necessary. In addition, a hypothetical case does not mean you can CREATE QUOTES. Quotes will be provided when needed for assignments.

### Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism (literary or artistic theft), copying someone else's work or other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any case of academic dishonesty will be considered grounds for an automatic failing grade in the course. University guideless will be followed for any and all offenses.

Having someone else do your work for you is also considered academic dishonesty.

When completing any of your writing assignments for this class, it is important to clearly attribute where you obtained your information from, whether it's a Web site or from an organization's internal document. To clarify, you CANNOT copy anything word for word from any source without putting quotes around it, even if it is given to you from the organization that is your client. This includes Web site copy, mission statements, etc. In these cases, you should paraphrase and cite the source as you write or simply quote it.

### **Student Honor Code**

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall of 1995 semester. Please review UF's academic honesty guidelines in detail at:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcode.php>

### Inclusiveness:

Every attempt is and will be made to make all courses non-sexist, diverse and multicultural in content. Please visit with me should you feel this goal is not being met.

### Students with Special Needs:

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.

### Final Notes:

I reserve the right to make changes, if necessary, to the grading system and schedule for this class.

While laptop computers are welcome for taking notes, please do not use them for anything else during class time. No phones calls or texting.

This is an intense course, but the end is infinitely rewarding. The work is cumulative, so if you are having difficulty with a particular concept or assignment, please see me immediately so you do not continue to struggle through the final project. I strive for an “open door” policy, and am available via email to help.

The following dates and discussion topics are a good faith attempt at providing you with a tentative course schedule, but please note that they are subject to change.

## **Schedule: PUR 4100, section 1557, Spring 2013**

- Week 1: Welcome; Class Overview  
Introductions; Writing Assignments Overview; Client Selection
- Week 2: Working with Clients; RFIs and RFPs; Effective Writing Principles  
You as a Solution; Resumes/Cover Letters/Executive Summaries
- Week 3: Client Selection Docs Due; PR Research  
PR Planning Part 1 (Situation Analysis, Focus Statements, Target Publics)
- Week 4: PR Planning Part 2 (Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Messages, Tactics)  
Writing Set 1 Overview; Work Day
- Week 5: Writing Set 1 Work Day  
Writing Set 1 Due
- Week 6: News Releases  
Media Kits (Fact Sheets, Bio Sketches, Backgrounders)
- Week 7: Persuasive Writing (Position Papers, Speeches)  
Writing Set 2 Overview; Work Day
- Week 8: Writing Set 2 Work Day  
Writing Set 2 Due
- Week 9: Spring Break: No Classes
- Week 10: Brochures; Newsletters  
PR Ads; PSAs; Direct Mail and Fundraising
- Week 11: Websites; Social Media  
Event Planning
- Week 12: Media Relations  
(No class meetings: off campus assignments)
- Week 13: Media Relations Docs due; Budgeting; Final Project Overview  
Final Project Work Day
- Week 14: Work Day  
Work Day
- Week 15: Work Day  
Work Day
- Week 16: Final Project Due  
Class Presentations