

Public Relations Writing -- PUR 4100 section 3958

Spring 2013 | Weimer 3028 | Mondays and Wednesdays | Periods 2 – 3

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(The best way to reach me is by email.)

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday Period 4

Course Website: <http://lss.at.ufl.edu> (Sakai)

Required Texts:

1. Newsom, D., & Haynes, J. (2010, ninth edition). *Public relations form & style*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth. ISBN: 1439082723
2. AP Style Guide (2012 or 2013 edition)

Course Description: Prepares students to meet the demands of the marketplace for persuasive, professional public relations writing skill.

Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills: PUR 3000 and JOU 3101 with minimum grades of C and proficiency in word processing.

Purpose of Course: Good writing is a skill that is highly valued in the public relations industry because writing can make or break a public relations tactic. And the quality of public relations tactics can make or break a campaign. This course is designed to help you learn about the process of public relations writing and its role in the strategic planning process of public relations. In this course, you will learn to plan effectively, think strategically, and write persuasively. This class will give you the opportunity to write copy for a variety of public relations tactics as a part of in-class and out-of-class writing assignments. Through readings, lectures, writing exercises, class discussions, and peer editing, you will learn the essential steps of the writing process and will become proficient in writing effective, strategy-based copy for a wide range of tactics.

Course Objectives: By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Adapt and apply basic writing skills to the public relations writing process.
- Edit written public relations materials and provide meaningful feedback.
- Examine and apply appropriate theories of communication, public relations, and persuasion to the public relations writing process.
- Examine appropriate communication and public relations models and apply them to the public relations writing process.
- Apply appropriate research methods, laws, and ethical considerations to public relations writing.
- Systematically and effectively plan for public relations writing.

- Write and produce a variety of public relations tactics (e.g., news releases, fact sheets, pitch letters, PSAs, newsletters, brochures, letters, speeches, social media, etc.)
- Build and maintain appropriate relationships with the media.

Instructional Methods: In this course you will learn by writing. We will use the assigned readings in the Newsom & Haynes (2010) text as a springboard for class discussion. The majority of our time in class will be spent discussing writing principles, evaluating and analyzing the writing strategies used in different tactics, editing each other's work, and writing, writing, writing. These activities will allow you to internalize and implement the public relations writing principles we will study this semester. The success of this class will depend on your engagement and participation, as well as your commitment to completing assignments before each class period. If you will come prepared, then your comments and insights will improve class discussion and the work of your classmates.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy: Your attendance in class is extremely important. Class discussion and peer editing are integral components of this class. If you miss a class period, you will miss out on explanations and insights that will improve your writing and your understanding of the writing principles and theories we will cover that day. Additionally, since you will soon enter the job market, I expect everyone to act like professionals. When you get a job or an internship, you are expected to be there. You can't just decide you don't feel like going to work. Unless you have a legitimate excuse, I expect you to arrive on time for every class period. The class will suffer if you are not in your seat on time ready to participate.

If you need to miss class for a legitimate reason please send me an email before the start of class to let me know that you will not be attending and the reason for missing class. Remember, it is your responsibility to let me know that you will not be in class. This is professional courtesy. If you make a habit of missing work without telling your boss, you won't last long on the job. The University of Florida defines the following as acceptable reasons for absence from class:

- Illness
- Serious family emergencies
- Special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences)
- Military obligation
- Severe weather conditions
- Religious holidays
- Participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate
- Court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena)

Because life can be unpredictable, you will be allowed two unexcused absences for the semester. Unexcused absences beyond two will result in a reduction of your course grade by two percentage points for each unexcused absence.

If you miss class, you are responsible for learning about class discussions and lectures from your classmates. Additionally, you are responsible for checking on the course Sakai site for instructions on assignments that you may have missed. Assignments and due dates are listed in the "Weekly Course Plan" at the end of this syllabus.

Make-up Policy: Dates for assignments, tests, and presentations have been announced in advance in the "Weekly Course Plan" so you can schedule other activities around these deadlines. You are expected to meet these deadlines. If you know you are going to miss class the day an assignment is due, contact me before the class period to let me know. However, you still need to turn in your assignment on time. Here are two options: (1) Include your assignment as an attachment to your email letting me know you will be missing class. (2) Send a hard copy of the assignment to class with a responsible classmate.

If you have an emergency and are not able to contact me before class, please email me as soon as you are able to let me know about your situation. If you have a conflict with the day of the scheduled editing exam in this course, please let me know in advance. (Please see the previous section of the syllabus for legitimate reasons for missing class). Exceptions to this policy will be rare and made only in cases of extraordinary, documented circumstances, as determined by the instructor.

Late assignments that are not excused by the instructor because of extraordinary circumstances will be penalized 5 points (or the equivalent of half a letter grade) for each day late. No work will be accepted more than 6 days after it is due unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor.

Computer Lab Policy: Food and drinks are not allowed in the computer lab.

Professionalism: It is my expectation that we will treat each other as professionals during our time together in class. That means everyone should be respectful and courteous to each other. While we are in class together, please show respect and courtesy to me and your classmates by turning off your cell phone ringer and abstaining from texting, surfing the Web, or catching up with friends on social media. We only have two hours together every class period, and your engagement during those two hours is necessary for the success of the class as a whole. This is also good practice for future internships, jobs, and interactions in other professional settings.

UF 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.

University Policy on Academic Misconduct: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Additionally, they are fundamental values of this course. Please be sure that you that you understand the UF Student Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>. I expect that you will do your own work in this class (i.e., no plagiarism, no cheating, no “double dipping” on assignments, etc.) and observe the University of Florida’s policy on academic honesty in fulfilling all course requirements. I will take violations of this policy will seriously. If you are found to be in violation of the UF Student Honor code, the following sanctions from the code will be implemented at the instructor’s discretion: 1) Assignment grade penalty. The student is assigned a grade penalty on an assignment including but not limited to a zero. 2) Course grade penalty. The student is assigned a grade penalty in the entire course including but limited to an "E". 3) Formal hearings and sanctions from the university.

Getting Help

For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Sakai, 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
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Grading Policies

Assignment	Percentage
Homework Assignments	15%
Writing Assignments	30%
Editing Test	10%
Participation	10%
Final Project	35% (25% written, 10% oral presentation)
<hr/> TOTAL	<hr/> 100%

Homework Assignments (15%): There will be seven homework assignments that will give you experience applying the theories and principles you will read about in the Newsom & Haynes (2010) textbook. These assignments are to be completed after you read the assigned chapter for the upcoming class period. These assignments will include a variety of activities from reflecting on what you have read, to completing exercises at the end of the chapter, to writing drafts of public relations tactics. These assignments will be graded using a check plus, check, or check minus. They will be evaluated on how well you followed directions, whether they were turned in on time, and the level of thought and effort you put into the completion assignment.

Writing Assignments (30%): There will be 15 writing assignments in this course. These assignments, which include the most commonly used public relations tactics, are designed to prepare you for the final project. These assignments will also prepare you for entry-level employment in the public relations industry. Writing assignments for this course must be coherent, logical, and carefully edited. Please use your AP Style Guide and pay attention to your writing style, grammar, and word choice. Before you turn in these assignments, you will receive feedback from two of your classmates. That means that when you get your assignment back you will have feedback from three people that can help you improve your writing. Your assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale using rubrics that will be provided to you when each assignment is introduced. Generally, each assignment will be evaluated on your ability to write to achieve public relations objectives, use appropriate style and voice appropriate to medium and target public, incorporate elements of persuasion, follow formatting instructions, and write clean copy.

Due dates for the writing assignments are provided in the syllabus in the weekly course plan. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day noted.

Editing Test (10%): There will be one test in this course that will focus on your ability to edit written copy for clarity, simplicity, style, and grammar. As we will be doing a lot of peer editing in this class, this test (and the review you will do for it) will help you to be an effective editor and improve your ability to edit your own work. This will be a closed-book, closed-notes quiz where you will have to identify style and grammar errors and rewrite poorly written sentences. The date of the quiz is listed in the “course schedule.” If you feel you are weak in this area, now is not a bad time to start reviewing your AP Style Guide and chapters 6 & 7 in the textbook.

Class Participation (10%): Since part of your grade in this course is based on class participation it is vital that you not only come to class but also that you come to class prepared. That means you need to read the assigned parts of the text before you come to class, complete any homework assignments for that class period, and participate in class discussions and activities. You will get so much more out of class if you come prepared. Part of your class participation grade will come from your involvement in peer editing of the writing assignments mentioned above. Your success and the success of the class as a whole depend on your active participation in the learning experience and the class discussions. When we have a class discussion, I expect everyone to contribute at least one meaningful comment. When we divide into groups, I expect you to work on the assigned project. The more you participate, the more you will learn. And don't forget that your classmates learning will also depend on your individual level of preparation for and engagement in class and group discussions.

Final project (35%): As a final project for this class, you will work in teams of two to produce a media kit for a real-world client. Your team will be responsible for identifying and working with the client. Part of your grade (25%) on this project will be based on the written materials you produce and the professional presentation of the media kit. A portion of your grade (10%) will be based on an oral presentation your team will make to the class on the day of the final about your project. We won't start working on this project in earnest until after spring break. However, you will probably want to start thinking about classmates you would enjoy working with and potential clients you would like to do work for. You will receive more instructions about this assignment later in the semester.

Grading Scale: The grading scale for the course is as follows

91-100 = A 89-90 = A- 88 = B+ 82-87 = B 80-81 = B-
 78-79 = C+ 72-77 = C 70-71 = C- 60-69 = D 59 or less = E

Course Schedule

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
1	7-Jan	Course Goals & Syllabus		
2	9-Jan	Public relations and the writer	NH chapter 1	Due: Homework 1 <i>Semester writing goals</i>
3	14-Jan	Ethical and legal responsibilities of the public relations writer	NH chapter 2	Due: Homework 2 <i>NH chpt. 2 exercise</i>
4	16-Jan	Persuasion	NH chapter 3 & Sakai reading	Due: Homework 3 <i>NH chpt. 3 exercise</i>
5	21-Jan	MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY - NO CLASS		
6	23-Jan	Research for the public relations writer	NH chapter 4	Due: Homework 4 <i>Writing research</i>

7	28-Jan	Public relations planning process	NH chapter 5	Due: Writing Assignment 1 <i>Situation analysis</i>
8	30-Jan	Style, content and grammar	NH chapters 6 & 7	Due: Homework 5 <i>NH chpt. 7 exercises</i>
9	4-Feb	Social media	NH chapter 8 (p. 150-154) & Sakai reading	Editing test
10	6-Feb	Media relations & news values	Sakai reading	Due: Homework 6 <i>Interview with prof. journalist</i>
11	11-Feb	Print news releases: standard	NH chapter 8 (p. 154-165) Sakai reading	Due: Writing Assignment 2 <i>Social media</i>
12	13-Feb	Print news releases: feature	Sakai reading	Due: Writing Assignment 3 <i>Standard news release</i>
13	18-Feb	Broadcast news releases & PSAs	NH chapter 8 (p. 165 – 180)	Due: Writing Assignment 4 <i>Feature news release</i>
14	20-Feb	Fact sheets and backgrounders	NH chapter 9	Due: Writing Assignments 5 & 6 <i>Broadcast news release & PSA</i> Bring: Org. fact sheet
15	25-Feb	Media pitches	NH chapter 9	Due: Writing Assignments 7 & 8 <i>Fact sheet & backgrounder</i>
16	27-Feb	E-mail, memos and letters; reports and proposals	NH chapter 11 & 12	Due: Writing Assignment 9 <i>Pitch letter & Homework 7</i>
17	4-Mar	SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS		
18	6-Mar	SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS		
19	11-Mar	Advertising copy	NH chapter 13	Due: Writing Assignment 10 <i>Final project client proposal</i>
20	13-Mar	Work day		
21	18-Mar	Newsletters	NH chapter 14	Due: Writing Assignment 11 <i>Public relations ad</i> Bring: Org. newsletter
22	20-Mar	Work day		Due: Progress report on client research
23	25-Mar	Brochures	NH chapter 15	Due: Writing Assignment 12 <i>Newsletter</i> Bring: Org. brochure
24	27-Mar	Work day		Due: Draft of situation analysis
25	1-Apr	Magazines	NH chapter 16	Due: Writing Assignment 13 <i>Brochure</i> Bring: Org. magazine
26	3-Apr	Work day		Due: Draft of strategy documents
27	8-Apr	Speeches and presentations	NH chapter 17	Due: Writing Assignment 14 <i>Magazine</i>
28	10-Apr	Speeches and presentations	NH chapter 17	Due: Writing Assignment 15 <i>Speech presentation</i>

29	15-Apr	Speeches and presentations	NH chapter 17	<i>Speech presentation cont.</i>
30	17-Apr	Individual meetings about final project		Due: Draft of final project
31	22-Apr	Individual meetings about final project		Due: Draft of final project
32	24-Apr	Work day		Due: Final project (Written materials) at end of class
33	FINAL	Final project presentations		Due: Presentation

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.