

## PUR 4100 -- PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING

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Spring 2014  
Sect. 3957, MW 5-6 (11:45-1:40)

Course Goal: The purpose of this course is to guide your progress toward becoming a professional public relations writer. Professional public relations practitioners write strategically and correctly at all times. Your success depends upon your production of well-thought out, precise and grammatically error-free copy that is intended to fulfill your organization's goals and objectives through targeting its key publics.

**Course Objectives:** By the end of the semester, each student who passes this course, at a minimum, will:

- Learn at least one strategy for developing a comprehensive situational analysis
- Formulate strategic objectives based upon an organizations unique situation
- Develop messages that help an organization meet its objectives
- Identify and prioritize appropriate publics for each message
- Create a range of public relations tools to successfully convey those messages

### REQUIRED READINGS, REFERENCE and MATERIALS:

- Newsom, D. and Haynes, J. (2014). Public Relations Writing: Form and Style (10<sup>th</sup> Ed.), Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Gainesville Sun (State/Local news, opinions and letters to the editor)
- AP Stylebook, latest edition
- Flash drive
- Stapler (recommended)

### GRADING:

In-class assignments	30%
Out-of-class assignments	35%
Quizzes	15%
In-class presentation	5%
Client Project	10%
Attendance and class participation	5%

**Grading:** Letter grades will be assigned based upon the points you earn on all assignments. I do not round up, and I do not curve. Please note that there is no provision for what the student "needs to make" in the course. You will be assigned the grade you earn. Attempts by the student to "lobby" instructor for a particular grade will detrimentally affect her individual grade. A=90-100; B+=88.5-89.99; B=80-88.49; C+=78.5-79.99; C=70-78.49; D+=68.5-69.99; D=60-68.49.

**Work quality and submission:** In-class assignments will be typed on the computers and may be corrected by using copy-editing symbols. However, professional public relations writers deal in error-free, clean copy. Therefore, all out-of-class assignments must be typed and perfect when submitted -- no typos, no white-out, and no editing marks. Hard copy documents longer than one page **must be stapled**, neither "dog eared" nor loose. Five points will be deducted from assignments not stapled. Ten points will be deducted for each spelling, word use and other major error, and five points will be deducted for any other error or stray mark. Your submissions will be awarded a "content" grade, which is an indication of the work's clarity, appropriateness and organization. Error points will be deducted from the content grade to determine an overall grade. An abundance of errors also will lower content grade.

**Fact Errors:** Any paper containing a major factual error will receive a "0" grade. A major factual error is defined as one which 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 time or place for an upcoming event. Errors that do a minor disservice to the reader, such as incorrect date or place for a

PAST event, MAY be graded somewhat more leniently (50 pt. minimum penalty) at the discretion of instructor, however, ALL fact errors will negatively impact overall grade for assignment.

**Due dates:** All assignments are due NO LATER THAN the beginning of class on the due date. You may NOT print out work in the lab once class begins. Place completed papers on the desk at the front of the room before class. Work submitted after class begins (if you are late to class) is considered one day late. All assignments will be penalized 10 points for each day late. No work will be accepted more than seven days after it is due unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Unless expressly approved by the instructor, email submissions will not be accepted. However, the instructor may require submission through Sakai for some assignments.

**Plagiarism:** It should go without saying that in a writing class, I expect the writing to be yours. Your client may have fully developed marketing materials, and you must use these for reference. However, be forewarned that even remote similarities between your work and theirs will negatively impact your outcomes in this class. If the instructor finds, in her subjective opinion, that your work bears substantial resemblance to work already produced, you will automatically FAIL THE COURSE. The issue may be forwarded to the department chair, college dean and/or university administrators for further action.

**In-Class Assignments (30%):** Students will write short assignments in class under deadline pressure. Evaluation of these assignments rewards critical thinking and precise editing. The work must be completed when assigned and cannot be made up if a student is absent. A zero grade is assigned for ALL missed in-class assignments, whether or not an absence is excused. Absences also negatively impact attendance grades.

**Attendance/Participation (5%):** PUR 4100 is a professional course, and it is a writing lab. You must be here and **on time** for each class meeting. You must be respectful of the professor and your classmates. Talking, browsing the web, and other class-disrupting behaviors will lower your participation grade. Attendance has a significant impact on your grade. Attendance will be considered as a percentage of your overall class grade. Each absence will result in a 10-point deduction from your participation grade. In addition, you will receive a zero for EACH graded assignment you miss while absent. You might imagine that an employer may forgive your absence in the event of an emergency, but the fact that you missed work will impact your evaluation – even if you have a “legitimate” excuse. Unless you are a virtually worthless employee (and I’m quite sure no sober UF grad ever has been!), your absence (no matter how justified) causes interruption of workflow and inconveniences other workers. If you must miss a class due to an emergency, let me know as soon as possible (PRIOR to returning to class). Whining and pleading may significantly lower your participation grade. Don’t ask!

There may be occasions during the semester that we will have a “virtual” class meeting. In the event our meeting does not require your trip to campus, you will receive a notification on Sakai or by other means. If you receive such a notice, follow the instructions for completing the session’s assignment online. The same deadlines will apply and any times assignment must (unless otherwise indicated) be completed during your scheduled class meeting time.

**Quizzes (15%):** Quizzes cover readings and lecture notes (75%), Editing (15%), and current local events (10%). Questions about the readings are **identical** to those found on your text book publisher’s website.

1. Go to [www.cengage.com](http://www.cengage.com)
2. Select “Higher Education.”
3. Enter the ISBN or search for “Newsom and Haynes.”
4. Make sure you click on the **10<sup>th</sup> edition**.
5. Click on “Access Free Content.” (it’s on the far right in blue)
6. Click on blue “Free Materials” tab (near bottom).
7. Click “Access Now” button
7. Select the appropriate chapter from the drop-down menu and click “Tutorial Quiz.”
8. Take quiz and check answers.

I will select 5-7 of these questions from each chapter. I will not change them in any way. The answers will be identical to those you find on the site. Therefore, I HIGHLY recommend that you take these quizzes before you come to class on the day a quiz is scheduled. The in-class quizzes are timed, so if you already know the answers to the book questions, you’ll have more time to spend on editing. Editing questions are

based upon AP Style, spelling, grammar, word use and other language-based scenarios. You may use your AP Style book if you bring it to class. Current event questions are taken from the local newspaper and cover topics that might have an impact on a local non-profit or business. As you read the articles, try to identify issues that might require a public relations professional's intervention!

**In-class Client Presentation (5%):** During the final weeks of class, students will deliver a speech on behalf of their client. The written speech will be submitted on presentation day for an out-of-class grade, and the presentation itself will be graded separately.

**Out of Class Assignments (35%) and Client Project (10%):** You will select a LOCAL non-profit client to work with during the semester. The client must be approved by the instructor. Many of your assignments will be written for this client and compiled for your client project. You will receive written specifications for each of these assignments. Please double check these before you submit your work. The client you work with MAY be part of a national franchise, HOWEVER, EVERY assignment turned in for class MUST be localized. If a submitted assignment is not clearly local, it will receive a "0" grade. The assignments are, at a minimum:

Required:           Memo to instructor\*  
                          Client Summary Sheet\*  
                          Fact sheet\*  
                          Backgrounder\*  
                          Client Biographical Sketch\*  
                          Position Paper  
                          Letter to the Editor  
                          Feature article  
                          Speech\*  
                          News release\*  
                          PSA\*

Other (choose one)\*:  
                          Webpage Content  
                          Facebook Page or Content  
                          Media pitch letter pertaining to a new story idea  
                          Memo to employees on a reduction in health insurance benefits  
                          Letter to disgruntled consumer/customer/contributor  
                          Article for internal newsletter  
                          Corporate ad or print public service announcement

Optional:  
                          Published client work for extra credit (replaces lowest grade)  
*NOTE: You MUST have written permission from client before submitting ANY content in any form to any medium that might be viewed by the public. Failure to obtain and/or provide evidence of client clearance will result in a 0 grade.*

\*Required for Client Project

**Academic Honesty:** The Honor Code: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. 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.' If in doubt at any time regarding the ethics of any assistance you might consider accepting in the course, see me immediately. Unauthorized assistance or re-use of previously submitted work is unacceptable. To view UF's academic honesty policy, go to: [www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php).