

Updated August 22, 2012

Course: Writing for Public Relations—PUR 4100
Section: 4072
Class Times: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:40-12:35
Class Location: Weimer 2050
Instructor: Professor Ann Christiano
3057 Weimer Hall
achristiano@jou.ufl.edu
(609) 647-3877—This is my cell number. Please use this number to reach me with questions or schedule appointments, but no texts, please.

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 12:45-2pm
Wednesday 1:30-3 pm

And by appointment

Course Overview

In this course, you will master the core qualities of excellent writing for public relations and public interest communications.

As a public relations or communications professional, it is imperative that you learn to write well across a variety of forms and mediums, and learn to write quickly. Because the best way to achieve better writing skills is to write frequently, you will complete and rewrite weekly writing assignments. Reading assignments will be posted online or distributed in class, and will come from real life examples. By the end of the course, you will have a portfolio of writing samples that demonstrate your ability not only to write well, but to think strategically on behalf of a client or cause.

This course is centered on you and your learning needs, with ample time and opportunity for hands-on learning. Each week, we will combine lecture and discussion with class labs that will give you an opportunity to apply what you've learned from the discussion with hands-on experience. Over the course of these labs, you will generate news releases, fact sheets, speeches and speech memos, blog posts and comments, and ultimately, a strategic communications plan. Each lab will include an opportunity for you to receive constructive critiques of your writing from me and from your classmates.

At the beginning of the course, you will identify a client. The client may be an organization you have volunteered with in the past or an organization whose values or mission with which you identify. The client must be an existing organization. No hypothetical or imagined clients will be accepted. Most of your writing assignments will be completed on behalf of this client. While I do not require you to obtain permission from the client or notify them, you may find it helpful to do so to gain necessary information to complete the assignments for this course. You will identify the core messages and audiences for that organization's cause and translate those messages across a variety of forms of strategic communication.

In this course, we will adhere to AP style. All work completed for this course is expected to be your own *original* work. There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism, and I expect that you are familiar with the University's policy on academic honesty and will follow that policy without exception. Students who plagiarize will fail this course. Factual and grammatical errors will not be tolerated, and will count against your grade for the given assignment. These include mathematical errors, word misuse, misspellings of the client's name or misuse of terms associated with relevant content or research.

Course Objectives

1. You will master the basic formats used most frequently in writing for public relations and public interest communications, including client proposals, news releases, speeches and speech memos, boilerplate language, tweets, blog posts and op-eds, message platforms, fact sheets, backgrounders, one-pagers and the components of a strategic communications plan.
2. You will understand the appropriate purposes of each of these kinds of documents and be able to make strategic decisions about when and how to employ them.
3. You will understand the importance of excellent writing to the success of your career.
4. You will learn and appreciate the importance of rewriting documents.
5. You will learn to write compelling, focused, persuasive, accurate and strategic documents that are logically organized and use correct grammar under deadline.
6. You will learn the importance of understanding who your audience is and how to craft your message and choose your medium accordingly.

Prerequisites

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

Appointments

Please stop by during office hours to discuss assignments, materials or other concerns related to the course. You may also schedule a meeting with me via email. My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus.

Course Professionalism

This College is a professional school, and professional decorum is expected at all times. I expect you to adhere to workplace norms of collegial and respectful interaction. That specifically means that you will

1. Arrive on time.
2. Not speak when another student or the instructor are speaking.
3. Use cell phones, lap tops or other electronic devices.

I expect that you will welcome and treat with respect the diverse perspectives of your fellow students, as will I. Violations of these expectations may result in students being asked to leave class and a lowering of your grade.

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 submit a documentation letter to the professor when requesting accommodation. Please notify me at the beginning of the semester if you would like to discuss requests for special provisions.

Class Attendance Policy

Class attendance is not required, but missing class will affect your participation grade. Additionally, I will give several surprise quizzes over the course of the semester, which will contribute significantly to your grade. These quizzes may not be made up.

Please do not ask me to review material that I covered when you missed class, unless you missed class due to serious illness.

Academic Honesty

The work you submit for this course must be your own. It must be original for this course. You must never use direct or paraphrased material from any source, including Web sites, without attribution. Attribution means citing the source of your facts within the text. Ideas that come from others must be credited.

You may not submit anything that you wrote for another class, or that you wrote as a volunteer or intern. You may not submit anything that was written for any purpose other than the given assignment.

I will handle any incident of academic dishonesty in accordance with the University of Florida policies that address cheating and unethical academic behavior, specifically the UF Honor Code and the Academic Honesty Guidelines.

Any case of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for this course. I will follow University Guidelines for any offense.

Any time you complete an assignment for this course you will clearly attribute the source of your information, including information obtained from organizations' web sites or internal documents. You cannot copy anything word for word, regardless of the source, without putting quotes around it and attributing the source.

For this class, we will use the MLA in-text citation method. To be clear, I expect that you will:

1. Put quotes around anything that includes more than three words in a row that were written by someone else.
2. Cite any data or fact that you did not personally discover and is not widely known.
3. Cite ideas you have paraphrased or incorporated into your papers.

Citation means providing attribution within the text for any ideas, insights or facts that are not your own. You must also list your sources in a bibliography.

Format

Everything you write for this course must be coherent, logical and carefully edited. Misspellings, syntax and grammatical errors are unacceptable in upper-level college writing, particularly writing by public relations students. Use page numbers in every assignment.

Requesting Feedback

I am happy to meet with you to address challenges you may be having or aspects that you're not clear on following class discussions. The best time to do that is during my office hours or by appointment. Please don't send me complete assignments for feedback before the due date. I'm always happy to answer specific questions.

Email

Please try to resolve questions in person before you email me. Please don't email me with an a question about your assignment within 24 hours of the due date.

Grading Policy

Your grade will be determined by performance on a series of writing assignments. There will be no exams for this course.

Your final grade will be a result of your overall performance in the course.

Class Participation

20 percent

Class participation counts toward 20 percent of your final grade. While missed classes harm your participation grade, perfect attendance does not ensure that you will receive the full 20 percent for class participation. You must be fully present during class, contribute to discussions, provide constructive and thoughtful feedback to your classmates, and demonstrate through your comments that you have read and understood assigned readings and benefited from class discussions.

Writing Assignments

30 percent

There are six short writing assignments for which you will be graded. You will submit the first draft for discussion after the first hour of class lab, and a second draft no later than one hour before the beginning of the next class. Assignments and due dates are clearly noted on the syllabus. Both must be submitted to receive credit for the assignment. Your second draft must demonstrate significant improvements over the first draft and reflect classroom feedback.

I will grade your writing assignments on a 100-point scale.

Each grammatical or spelling error will count for five points off your grade for the assignment. This includes word choice and syntax issues. Factual errors including

misspellings of client names or misuse of core terms associated with the field in which your client works will count for 10 points off.

I will award points based on your demonstrated understanding of the assignment, the level of creativity, and your ability to write compelling, accurate and precise copy.

No late writing assignments will be accepted. Writing assignments may not be made up.

Speech and Speech Presentation **15 percent**

You will pair up with a classmate and write a speech for that classmate to deliver. You will also prepare a speech memo and anticipated Q and A. You and the person who delivers your speech will share the same grade for this assignment.

Over the course of your career, you will often be required to develop speeches that others deliver—this assignment will help you think through the components of preparing a speaker to deliver content with which they may be unfamiliar.

Strategic Communications Plan **35 percent**

We will spend four weeks toward the end of the semester discussing and developing a strategic communications plan. Your final plan and your presentation of the plan will comprise 35 percent of your grade. I expect that you will develop the components along the way, and meet with me during office hours to discuss the work you've completed. Your plan will be graded on your demonstrated understanding of the specific components and your ability to pull them together into a single cohesive document.

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

- A 90-100 percent
- B 80-89 percent
- C 70-79 percent
- D 60-69 percent
- E 0-59 percent

Late Work

No assignments will be accepted after the due date.

Required Materials:

The Associated Press Stylebook

When Words Collide (Buy this book online)

"Use Twitter as a Lens, Not a Megaphone" (available for free download at www.fenton.com)

Social Media Tools (also available for free download at www.fenton.com)

I will assign and distribute additional readings throughout the course.
Please bring an external hard drive to every class.

Class Discussion and Assignment Schedule:

	Tuesday	Thursday
Week 1	August 23	August 23 Course Overview Distribute syllabus, client selection form and readings for Tuesday. Class Discussion: <i>Know your audience</i> Audience identification assignment distributed
Week 2	August 28 Assignments Due: Completed Client Selection Form and audience identification form—Bring printouts of both to class Class Discussion: <i>Creating a client proposal</i> Class Lab: Begin writing client proposal Client Proposal Assignment Distributed Message strategy readings distributed	NO CLASS
Week 3	September 4 Assignment Due: Client Proposal Class Discussion: <i>Preventing Plagiarism</i> <i>Developing a Message Strategy</i>	September 6 Class Lab: Begin Message Strategy Break Class Feedback

	<p>Reading assignment: Distributed message documents</p> <p>Message Strategy Assignment distributed</p>	Distribute sample news releases
Week 4	<p>September 11</p> <p>Assignment Due: Message Strategy</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Writing compelling news releases and boilerplate</i></p> <p>Reading assignment: Distributed news releases</p> <p>News Release and Boilerplate Assignment Distributed</p>	<p>September 13</p> <p>Class Lab: News Release and Boilerplate</p> <p>Break Class Feedback</p> <p>Distribute speeches, speech memos and Q & A</p>
Week 5	<p>September 18</p> <p>Assignment Due: News Release and Boilerplate</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Writing for verbal communication: speeches, background memos and Q & A</i></p> <p>Class time to review and rehearse speeches and ask follow up questions</p> <p>Reading assignment: Distributed speeches, speech memos and Q & A</p> <p>Speech Assignment Distributed</p>	<p>September 20</p> <p>Class Lab: Speechwriting and Q & A</p> <p>Break</p> <p>Feedback on speech draft</p>
Week 6	<p>September 25</p>	September 27

	<p>Assignment Due: Five-minute speech, Q & A and speech memo.</p> <p>Bring two printed copies of completed assignment to class.</p> <p>Speech Presentations</p>	Speech presentations
Week 7	<p>October 2</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Writing your social media strategy</i></p> <p>Class Lab: Social Media Strategy Memo</p> <p>Social Media Strategy Memo Assignment Distributed</p> <p>Distribute sample fact sheets and one pagers</p>	<p>October 4</p> <p>Speech presentations</p>
Week 8	<p>October 9</p> <p>Assignment Due: Social Media Strategy Memo</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Writing fact sheets and one-pagers</i></p> <p>Reading assignment: Distributed readings</p> <p>One Pager Assignment Distributed</p>	<p>October 11</p> <p>NO CLASS</p>
Week 9	<p>October 16</p> <p>Class Lab: The one-pager</p>	<p>October 18</p> <p>Assignment Due: One Pager</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>The significance of a strategic</i></p>

		<p><i>communications plan, what it is, why we create one.</i></p> <p>Strategic Communications Plan Assignment Distributed</p>
Week 10	<p>October 23</p> <p>Class Lab: Beginning the strategic communications plan</p>	<p>October 25</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Audience definition</i></p>
Week 11	<p>October 30</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Setting measurable goals</i></p>	<p>November 1</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Defining the relevant context Message and audience</i></p>
Week 12	<p>November 6</p> <p>Class work and critique time</p>	<p>November 8</p> <p>Class work and critique time</p>
Week 13	<p>November 13</p> <p>Class Discussion: <i>Developing your strategic communications plan: Evaluating future opportunities Implementation and tactics</i></p>	<p>November 15</p> <p>NO CLASS</p>
Week 14	<p>November 20</p> <p>Meetings to discuss strategic communications plans</p>	<p>November 22</p> <p>NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Holiday</p>
Week 15	<p>November 27</p> <p>Assignment Due: Bios, Resumes and Cover Letters Class Critique</p>	<p>November 29</p> <p>Class Critique of Cover Letters, Bios and Resumes, continued</p>
Week 16	<p>December 4</p>	

	Final Communications Plan Due	
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