

The skill of writing is to create a context in which other people can think.

- Edwin Schlossberg

Class Times Mondays & Wednesdays; Periods 9-10
4:05 – 6:00 p.m.

Classroom 3024 Weimer Hall

Instructor Michelle Hinson

Office Location 3059 Weimer Hall

Office Hours TBD and by appointment
You can always chat with me before or after class.

Phone 352 -871-4575(mobile)

Email mhinson@jou.ufl.edu or michelle.hinson@rocketmail.com

Twitter @michellehinson

Feel free to email me with questions or concerns. If your classmates can benefit from your question, and you can keep it to 140 characters or less, then tweet to #ufpr4100.

Text

Wilcox, D. L. & Reber, B. H. (2013). *Public relations writing and media techniques* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Optional But Strongly Recommended:

Associated Press Stylebook Online Version

Make sure to use the dictionary and thesaurus functions in Word.

Prerequisites

Minimum grade of C in PUR 3000 and in JOU 3101, proficiency in word processing.

Course Description

In this course, you will develop the writing and editing skills necessary to succeed in a public relations career. You will also learn to think critically about current events and how they relate to public relations practice.

According to public relations professionals, two of the most desired traits in new hires are a good business sense (including critical thinking) and excellent writing skills. Thus, practitioners must be polished and capable writers, skilled in diverse forms and styles of writing, and capable of working quickly to meet deadlines. This course is an intensive workshop in persuasive public relations writing, which combines lectures as well as in-class and out-of-class writing assignments that will simulate the realities of the professional writing environment for a public relations professional.

Course Goals

The purpose of this class is to teach you effective public relations writing principles and techniques. You will also gain experience in writing for a variety of public relations communication tactics, including news releases, fact sheets, backgrounders, brochures, media pitches and social media. In this course, you will learn writing for public relations requires effective planning, strategic thinking, and good writing.

The goals for this course are:

- 1) To introduce you to **issues management**, so that you begin thinking and behaving like a public relations professional.
 - 2) To provide a **safe environment** in which you can explore your writing potential, building upon principles discussed in class.
 - 3) To acclimate you to the **different facets of public relations practice**, giving you a sense of what working in each area is like.
 - 4) To help you develop content across **multiple channels and audiences**, and work effectively in this age of media convergence.
 - 5) To foster **skills and confidence** that will differentiate you from other applicants. when you pursue internships and employment.
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Learning Objectives

You will gain valuable experience in writing and editing, as well as monitoring current events, identifying issues, filtering information, making decisions and developing strategy.

Specifically, you will learn to:

- ✓ Analyze news, trends and emerging issues with an eye toward possible public relations implications.
- ✓ Use research to find reliable sources of information.
- ✓ Develop key messages and tailor them to specific audiences to the achievement of strategic public relations objectives.
- ✓ Quickly produce clear, concise, well-organized and accurate content, building upon strong key message development.
- ✓ Effectively tailor content for multi media platforms and communication methods.
- ✓ Apply reasoning, critical thinking, persuasion and creativity as you move through the writing and editing process.
- ✓ Use AP Style, as well as correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- ✓ Provide constructive feedback to your peers, and embrace such feedback in return.
- ✓ Develop a final portfolio suitable for a professional job interview.

Class Notes

Each class session will feature some instruction from the instructor, but most of our time will be spent on the daily assignments -writing, re-writing, discussing, etc. We'll follow the book as a guide, reference, and point of departure. Assigned readings should be read prior to class.

You will need a Twitter account. If you don't already have one, establish one as soon as possible.

Cell Phones

Vibrate only unless you are on the National Organ Transplant waiting list.

Readings

It's impossible to learn about writing and improve your writing skills without reading topical news and feature writing and watching quality news broadcasts. It's also important to be aware of news, government, history and media. Expect to be a regular reader of newspapers, magazines, specialized publications and websites as well as a listener of radio and television news.

You must subscribe to Ann Wylie's Writing Tips newsletter: <http://www.mailermailer.com/x?oid=21528q>

Assignments: Reading

There is one required text for the course. Additional required readings will be assigned as needed.

Assignments: Writing

Your writing must align with organizational objectives and public relations strategy: maintain appropriate style, tone and voice; adhere to AP Style and the tenets and proper grammar and spelling; and demonstrate the core principles of reasoning, critical thinking, persuasion and creativity.

In the most general sense, this is how assignments will be assessed:

A = Excellent. Professional quality. Could be printed/published as is.

B = Good. Strong work but needs a few minor revisions.

C = Average. Minimum effort. Errors. Lack of creativity. Needs revisions.

D = Poor. Serious deficiencies (e.g. strategy). Needs a complete overhaul.

F= Unacceptable. Not worth assessing. Missed deadline.

Writing well takes practice. Few students, if any, will start this course writing at an “A” level. Skills will improve as the semester progresses.

Grades are earned, not awarded. In this class, that means you must actively participate, put in the necessary time and effort (both in and outside of class), pay attention to details, and prove that you are committed to delivering quality work. **Remember: spellcheck only checks for misspelling not appropriate word choice.**

Students who have writing skills problems will be referred to the Reading & Writing Center.

Seek clarity. Take ownership of your performance if you don't understand something, let me know. The same holds true if you are concerned about your progress. Please talk with me at any point in the semester. I will gladly help you.

Course Components

Participation

Listen actively to the instructor and your fellow students, and make meaningful contributions to class discussion. Be thoughtful and instructive when editing the work of fellow classmates.

Assignments

Most weeks, you will complete an individual writing assignment related to the week's topic(s). Each writing assignment will go through several rounds of review, including review, before being graded. You must be in class and provide thoughtful edits in order to receive participation credit.

Quizzes

Quizzes will be given to assess mastery of key principles. Most quizzes will draw from the assigned readings and class discussions. In addition, a few AP Style questions will be included. This provides a great opportunity to use the AP Stylebook and increase your confidence in editing copy.

Final portfolio

This will involve finalizing several individual assignments from the semester, compiling all of this work into a professional portfolio. (Further guidance will be provided later in the semester.)

Attendance

Absence from class is not in your best interest. Quizzes are unannounced. You are responsible for all material covered in class, including readings, class discussions, video presentations, and any other material covered. Students missing class must obtain class notes from another student; notes are not available from the instructor. Being on time for class is as important as attending class.

Having more than two absences is considered excessive, no matter the reason. You are not required to justify the first two absences, but you have to turn in your writing exercise that same week. If you miss three classes, you will receive a penalty of -5% on your final class average. Thus, for example, a person who has an 80% (B) average but has missed three meetings would receive a 75% (C+) grade for the semester. If you miss four or more classes you will receive a penalty of -25% on your final class average. After the first two absences, no late assignments will be accepted.

Grading

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Your final grade will be weighted as follows:

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|----------------------------|-----|
| ➤ Participation | 10% |
| ➤ Assignments | 50% |
| ➤ Quizzes | 10% |
| ➤ Public Relations Plan | 10% |
| ➤ Final Communications Kit | 20% |

MakeUps, Late Assignments, and Extra Credit

It is important for public relations practitioners to know how to adhere to pre-determined project deadlines. Dates have been announced in advance for the “Weekly Course Schedule” so students can plan other activities around those deadlines. Exceptions will be rare and made only in cases of extraordinary, documented circumstances, as determined by the instructor. Any late assignments accepted will be graded lower than work turned in on time. No extra credit will be given for additional work.

Inclusiveness

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

Final grades:

A	(95-100)
A-	(90-94)
B+	(87-89)
B	(83-86)
B-	(80-82)
C+	(77-79)
C	(73-76)
C-	(70-72)
D+	(67-69)
D	(63-66)
D-	(60-62)
E	59 and below

Official UF grading policy: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Your writing will be evaluated for content, format, appropriateness, grammar, syntax, spelling, and most importantly, by achievement of behavioral goals. If you can't achieve the behavioral goals, then it's not good writing, but good writing is a must. This is the reason why the following penalties apply in each writing assignment:

- **Misuse of commas, semicolons, colons, etc.:** -5
(if too frequent, with multiple errors in each page) - 10
- **Spelling errors:** -15
- **Factual errors:** -15
(Please note: there should be no factual errors. Ever. Period.)

Disabilities

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.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to understand and conform to the letter and spirit of the University of Florida Code of Conduct. Students who violate the code are subject to immediate failure of the course and

referral of the case to the College of Journalism and Communications Dean's Office for further action and determination of penalty.

Preamble In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

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.

For more information about academic honesty, contact, Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 392-1261.

Academic Misconduct

All students in attendance at The University of Florida are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. All acts of dishonesty in any academic work constitute academic misconduct. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following:

- **Cheating:** using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- **Plagiarism:** representing the words, ideas, or data of another as one's own in any academic exercise.
- **Fabrication:** unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- **Aiding and abetting academic dishonesty:** intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another student commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. 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>.

Other UF Resources

University counseling services and mental health services:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx> or 392-1575

University Police Department: 392-1111 or 911for emergencies.

Schedule

The schedule is subject to change, as needed, to further the understanding of the course materials by the students. Students are expected to come to class prepared.