

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.” – Mark Twain

Class Times Tuesday & Thursday, Periods 4-5

10:40 am – 12:35 pm

Classroom Tuesday: 2056 Weimer Hall

Thursday: 3028 Weimer

Instructor Michelle Hinson

Office Location 3059 Weimer Hall

Office Hours Tue, Thur. 9:00 – 10:30 am 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.

While no text is required for the course, you must subscribe to the following:

Ann Wylie’s Writing Tips newsletter: <http://www.mailermailer.com/x?oid=21528q>

Additional readings will be distributed weekly.

Optional But Strongly Recommended:

Associated Press Stylebook Online Version

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

Please purchase a flash drive and bring it to class or save your work in the cloud. The hard drives on the lab computers are not dependable. Lost or inaccessible work is not a valid excuse for missing an assignment deadline.

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.
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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. ***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

Readings will be assigned and distributed weekly.

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 (Communications Plan & Media Kit)

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:

- Attendance & Participation 10%
- Assignments (in & out of class) 30%
- Quizzes 10%
- Communications Plan 30%
- Media Kit 20%

Attendance & Participation (10%): Listen actively to the instructor and your fellow students, and make meaningful contributions to class discussion. Complete class activities, peer edits and writing assignments **Each week one student will be required to bring in one example of a piece of writing you thought was good and one you thought sucked.** Examples can be from: newspapers, newsletters, blogs, social media or any medium that caught your eye (for better or worse).

Writing Assignments (30%): We will be doing a lot of writing in this class! In addition to out of class assignments, during certain class periods there will be in-class writing activities that I will collect.

Pop Quizzes (10%): Six unannounced quizzes will be given to assess your mastery of the readings and key principles. Most quizzes will draw from the assigned readings and class discussions

Communication Plan (30%) You will be asked to select an existing client for whom you will introduce a new product or service. Then, you will **develop a public relations communication plan to inform key audiences and to introduce the new product or service.** You are beginning work on this project early in the semester; and you will be expected to address elements of the plan throughout the semester on a scheduled basis. However, the bulk of the plan and its related presentation will be completed in the last few weeks of the semester. The components of this project are:

The **communication plan** represents **30% of your final grade** in PUR 4100. Therefore, it should receive substantial time and attention if you are to receive a passing grade in this course. A rubric is attached to this handout; it outlines the elements that will be assessed in evaluating your communication plan.

Media Kit (20%): Your media kit will coincide with the introduction of the new product or service described in your communications plan. More information will be given in class.

Make-Ups, 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.
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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 911 for 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.

Major Projects

Presentation of New Product/Pitch to Class April 14 & 16

Communications Plan Deadlines – Final Due April 28

Situation Analysis drafts due Friday May 23

Objectives, Target Audiences, Strategies drafts due Friday May 30

Tactics, Timeline drafts due Friday June 6

Budget, Evaluation drafts due Monday June 9

Communication Plan due April 28

Media Kit – Final Due April 28

Backgrounder

Fact Sheet

Press Release

Feature Article for Trade Magazine

Blog Post, Facebook Post, Tweet

Course Schedule

Week 1 (January 6 & 8) Public Relations is not Journalism

1/6: Intro to class, instructor and each other. Assignment: Resume and Bio Brief

1/8: Reporting VS Writing for PR.

Resume and Bio Brief Due at end of class on Thur. Jan. 8.

Week 2 (January 13 & 15) The Role of Creativity in Writing

You will act as a public relations specialist for this company for the duration of class. All assignments will be geared toward your chosen company. You will end the semester with a portfolio of work for your chosen company. You will have to develop a communications plan and media kit introducing a new product or service for your organization. Choose wisely and have fun.

Internal Communication Assignment:

1. Company Profile (Not a rehash of your company's current profile. Be creative, have fun and interject your own talent and perspective.) **Due at end of Class on January 15.**
2. SWOT Analysis of your chosen company **(8-10 pages) Due at beginning of class on January 20.**

Week 3 (January 20 & 22) Intro to PR: Including Research & Planning

Planning Programs and Campaigns & Measuring Success

Public relations is a strategic management function.

Jan 20: Guest speaker discussing the business of public relations. TBA

Internal Communication Assignment:

Use the SWOT analysis of your dream company to identify a challenge facing your organization. Draft a brief plan on how you would recommend facing the challenge. This will be the basis for the new product or service you create for your communications plan and media kit. **Assignment Due: At start of class on Tuesday, January 27.**

Week 4 (January 27 & 29) Becoming a Persuasive Writer

Jan. 27: Guest Speaker TBA

Internal Communication Assignment:

Draft a newsletter article for your company's employee magazine introducing the challenge and solution you identified last week: **Assignment Due: At start of class on Tuesday, February 3.**

Week 5 (February 3 & 5) Finding & Making News

External Communication Assignment:

1. What is currently happening with the company that is newsworthy? Identify the following:

- 10 topics

- Key message for each topic

- Audience for each message

- Tactic

2. Create boilerplate for your company

Assignment Due: At start of class on Tuesday, February 10.

Week 6 (February 10 & 12) Writing for Mass Media

External Communication Assignment: Draft two news release aimed at two specific target audiences and media. The releases must use two different angles.

Assignment Due: At end of class on Thursday, February 12.

Week 7 (February 17 & 19) Pitching

Watch PRSA webinar on pitching.

Write three different pitches aimed at three different target media. Make sure to research the intended reporters and bloggers. Pitches can be by phone, email, tweet or YouTube. You can use any combination. Be creative! **Pitches Due End of Class on February 19.**

Week 8 (February 24 & 26) Creating News Features

Draft a feature article for a trade publication introducing your new product or service and why it is needed. Research publications so you target the correct one. Identify key messages. **Feature Due at End of Class on February 26.**

Week 9 (March 3 & 5) SPRING BREAK!

Week 10 (March 10 & 12) Writing for Social & Digital Media External

Digital Media Release, Facebook Post, Tweet, Blog Post

Week 11 (March 17 & 19) Writing for Social & Digital Media Internal

E-Newsletter Article, Intranet Article

Week 12 (March 24 & 26) Communications Plan

Objectives, Target Audiences, Strategies, Tactics, Timeline, Budget, Evaluation

Week 13 (March 31 & April 2) We're in Crisis People!

Timed activities simulating a crisis situation.

Week 14 (April 7 & 9)

Guest speaker. Effective Presentation Strategies.

Week 15 (April 14 & 16)

Presentation of New Product/Pitch to Class April

Week 16 (April 21 & 23) Nearing the Finish Line!

4/21: Work on Communications Plan & Media Kit

4/23 Reading Day

Week 17 (April 28) The End!

4/28: Communications Plan & Media Kit Due at Start of Class

Your final communications kit should include:

1. Communications Plan: must include SMART objectives

Situation Analysis

Objectives, Target Audiences, Strategies

Tactics, Timeline

Budget, Evaluation drafts

2. Transmittal Letter for Communications Plan

Your final Media kit (external) should include:

1. Backgrounder

2. Product Fact Sheet
 3. News Release
 4. Product Pitch
 5. Feature Article
 6. Op-Ed
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Formatting, Mechanics & Fact Errors

All written work submitted for this course must be **coherent, logical, and carefully edited**. Writing proficiency is necessary to pass this course. **Misspellings, syntax and grammar errors as well as other writing problems are unacceptable** in upper-division college writing, especially in work by public relations students. Do not submit materials with editing marks on them; all assignments must be “**client-ready**.” Students may be referred to the Writing Center for more intensive work on specific writing skills and all students are encouraged to consider seeking Writing Center support for intensive one-on-one work in basic writing skills.

Unless otherwise specified, **all writing assignments must be typed with a 12- point serif font (e.g., Times, Palatino, or Times New Roman), double-spaced and framed by one-inch margins. AP style guidelines should be followed for all media related materials.** Because this class is a writing class, no additional consideration will be given to written work accompanied by artwork or anyother kind of design element. However, a well-designed portfolio will be an advantage as a tool to assist in an internship or job search.

Because this is a technical writing course as much as anything else, strong mechanics are expected. Unless otherwise specified, **use AP style on all media assignments.** Do not assume you will remember everything from earlier courses. Locate and open your stylebook now and review.

Any paper containing a **major factual error will receive a grade of 50**. 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 which do a minor disservice to the reader, such as incorrect time or place for an event, will be graded somewhat more leniently, but remember **all factual errors will be considered serious**.

Course Requirements and Evaluation.

Detailed written instructions for each of the assignments and the communication plan will be provided to you; templates will not be distributed.

Online Course Evaluation Process

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>.