

Public Relations Writing

JOUR 3421-M50

Fall 2015

Online

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS**CATALOG/COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Emphasis on communication tactics; plan, write, and produce public relations tools; audience and media selection; print and electronic media and new media.

PREREQUISITE:

JOUR 2121, JOUR 3400

TEXTBOOKS:

Newsom, D., & Haynes, J. (2014). *Public relations writing: Form and style* (10th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

The Associated Press Stylebook 2015 (or 2014). New York: Basic Books.

CLASS FORMAT:

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. You must have Internet access and Microsoft Word or other word processing software that generates a “.doc” or “.docx” extension.

Browser: To view lesson slideshows, you must be running Internet Explorer 5 or higher. To determine what browser version you have, select from the browser menu Help > About. To download the file, click on your computer’s platform system: PC or Mac. The download may take an hour or more, so plan to do it at a convenient time.

You will view the lesson slideshows from the Desire2Learn course. These PowerPoint slides represent supplemental information that you can use and reference in your work. As a way of referencing in your work, note the chapter, subject and slide number.

You must have Microsoft Word software. I must be able to open your work to grade it. Work submitted in a software package not noted as acceptable in this syllabus (Microsoft Word) may result in point deductions being assessed to your work.

COURSE WEBSITE ADDRESS:

(The course page will be open from August 24, 2015 to December 10, 2015.)

Go to the University of Memphis home page: <http://www.memphis.edu>

1. Click on the “MyMemphis” link at the bottom of the left column menu.
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. Click on the “eCampus Resources” tab.
4. In the center column of the page, click on the blue UoM eCourseware link.
5. Down on that page, in the Fall 2015 course list available to you, click on the link for JOUR 3421 - M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

GRADING:

Quality of Work:

A large part of public relations is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. Written assignments will be graded based on AP style, grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as content. Problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

I expect your work to be good and to be yours. What is not yours should be fully cited. You may use either APA or MLA formatting when documenting sources. The Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource for citation practices and can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

Tests and Assignments:

There are 1,000 possible points in this class:

- Publics 50
- Research/backgrounder 50
- Feature story 50
- Media release with pitches 60
- Column 50
- Blog and social media 50
- Newsletter content 75
- Brochure and printing 50
- Fundraising letters/prospect 50
- PSA /ad 50
- Speech with visuals 65
- Online portfolio 50
- Crisis communication 150
- AP and Grammar Quiz 25
- Exam 1 50
- Exam 2 50
- 5 discussions @ 15 points each 75

Written assignments are graded based on the following scale:

A	90-100 percent	Professional work Clear thinking reflected in clear writing. Uses appropriate style for type media. Knows and uses preferred form. No errors in form, grammar or spelling. Adapted to intended audience (public).
B	80-89.99	Near professional work

	percent	Lacks polish (style) of A work. Form is correct. No more than two errors in form, grammar or spelling. Adapted to intended audience.
C	70-79.99 percent	Acceptable as a classroom assignment only. Not usable professionally without further editing/corrections. Up to seven errors detected. [or] Not well adapted to intended audience or medium.
D	65 – 69.99 percent	Needs significant work in form and/or style. Up to 12 errors detected. [or] Little consideration of needs/interests of intended audience or of medium.
F	64.99 percent and below	Unacceptable in form and style [or] Fails to adapt to audience or medium.

Final grades will be calculated based on total points earned:

- A 900 to 1,000
- B 800 to 899.99
- C 700 to 799.99
- D 650 to 699.99
- F 649.99 and below

Testing and Assignment Procedures:

Course work will be accomplished every week. There will be writing assignments, quizzes, tests and discussion board participation. Each must be completed by its due date and time (Central Standard Time), which varies by assignment, quiz, test and discussion board. Check each due time to ensure that you complete and submit material by the deadline.

The tests will consist of true/false and multiple-choice questions, which will contain one or more units of study. Tests will be limited as to time. The computer will cut you off at the end of the prescribed time period, regardless of whether you have completed all questions. You may use your text to confirm an answer, but be aware that time limits will not allow you to spend much time flipping through the text. You should read and be familiar with each section before taking its test.

These assignments and discussions must be submitted per instructions; no credit will be given outside of the proper submission guidelines.

Your success in this online course will depend on your willingness to read the textual and supplemental learning materials, successfully complete tests and written assignments, and participate in discussion activities, as scheduled.

You are required to ask via e-mail or call me with your questions as to the proper completion of the assignment, and I will get back to you within 48 hours. **It is your responsibility to ensure clarification of instructions.**

Public Relations Writing is a practical, hands-on course that teaches you to think and write as professionals. Consequently, meeting deadlines is essential for media professionals. In other words, all deadlines are firm. **No late work will be accepted.**

See Timetable document for class readings, assignments, grading criteria and due dates.

SUBMITTING FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK:

All assignments must be uploaded to the course Dropbox. (Discussion Board topics can be written directly in the Discussion Board interface.) In this class, most assignments will be produced for a client. The professor serves not just as the instructor, but also as the supervisor/director of the project.

FIVE PILLARS OF JOUR3421

- *Professionalism:* Students learn the professional and ethical standards of the public relations industry by discussing ethics statements from a variety of professional organizations, working through simulated ethical scenarios from a variety of perspectives and learning how and why legal ramifications may exist within the field. Students continue work on their personal portfolio sites as a way of establishing their personal professional brand.
- *Writing:* JOUR 3421 focuses on writing for a variety of public relations formats, including press releases, position or white papers, fact sheets, press conference statements, brochures and newsletters, writing for various social media platforms and feature releases. Students also edit and critique not only their work but also the work of their peers.
- *Multimedia:* Students look at the use of social media in public relations, including the potential for community engagement and management, the importance of consistent organizational voice across multiple platforms and how to translate one message into a variety of social media platforms. Students also add collateral pieces to their online portfolios.
- *Critical Thinking:* Students must demonstrate an understanding of writing for a specific public, writing from a specific point of view for an organization and how to choose the best media channel to accomplish both of those tasks.
- *Media Literacy:* Students increase their media literacy by looking at how to engage with a variety of traditional and social media, to see how relationships and communities are built within these channels and how to interact and engage with others in the media appropriately.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR3421

- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communication;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;

- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically):

Students will:

- Explain how the writer's purpose, intended public and requirements of the medium affect style and content;
- Recognize potential problems and solutions in media relations;
- Recognize legal and ethical problems associated with public relations writing;
- Understand the differences between writing for various mediums.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies):

Students will:

- Earn a passing score on written assignments, quizzes and exams;
- Apply Associated Press guidelines to written materials;
- Proofread and edit their own work and the work of others;
- Pitch story ideas to news media; and
- Respond to crisis communication situations.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR3421:

This class is designed to equip students with the skills needed to write correctly in controlled, mass and social media outlets for various audiences.

Awareness:

- Learn about the important role of writing in public relations, including journalistic news values, AP-style and the various forms of writing for different media.

Understanding:

- Understand how to be strategic in public relations writing.

Application:

- Create collateral materials that are common in public relations practice; write for various forms of media; respond to a crisis communication situation.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- *Awareness*: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- *Understanding*: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- *Application*: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentrations.

EMAIL:

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to <http://iam.memphis.edu> to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the university.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions or dismissal of the student from the university.

“Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com’s restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.” (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

Intellectual property and copyright guidelines

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook: The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

ONLINE SETEs:

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

DIVERSITY:

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communications reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

WEATHER POLICY:

Check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day’s work.

AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:

All written work in this class should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don't know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.