

Journalism 436 – Public Relations Writing

College of Mass Communications and Information Studies
University of South Carolina

Semester: Fall 2008

Instructor: Mr. Mike Quinn

Office hours: 5:00 – 5:30 p.m. on M-W, Room 3004 or by appointment

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COURSE OBJECTIVE

This is a three-credit public relations writing course designed to review and practice the writing skills necessary to perform the duties of a public relations practitioner.

TEXTS

Required: *Stylebook and Libel Manual*, Associated Press

Strongly Recommended:

Public Relations Writing: Principles in Practice, Second Edition, Donald Treadwell and Jill B. Treadwell

The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition, Strunk and White

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be graded on their ability to write news releases, fact sheets, letters, feature stories, Internet materials, brochure copy, specialized publications and other written material used by a public relations specialist. Each student will be asked to produce a media kit in lieu of a final exam. In addition, there will be two (2) in-class quizzes.

GRADING POLICY

Since the teaching of writing in this course is directed toward preparing the student to do quality professional work, the following criteria will be used for evaluating assignments.

Letter grades will be given to all assignments as follows:

- A** (93-100) Work is professional and would be accepted for an “on the job” assignment. (A+, 98-100)

- B** (85-92) Work is good, but needs limited editing. Rewrite may be required. (B+, 90-92)
- C** (77-84) Work is average and needs editing. Rewrite is required. (C+, 82-84)
- D** (59-76) Work is not acceptable. Rewrite is required. (D+, 74-76)

A student's final grade is calculated by averaging the grades from the writing assignments and the two quizzes. This average counts for 80 percent of the final grade. The media kit final project makes up the remaining 20 percent of the final grade.

Homework assignments are due at the beginning of each class. Class exercises are due at the end of each class. You'll have a chance to do rewrites on some of the writing assignments to improve your grade. All rewrites are due no later than seven calendar days after the initial assignment was returned to the student.

ATTENDANCE

I would like to approach this course as a professional public relations practitioner would his or her job. If you anticipate an absence, please notify the instructor. Absence from more than 10 percent of scheduled class sessions (3 classes) is excessive, according to USC policy. **A grade of zero will be assigned for homework due on a class day with an unexcused absence.** If you notify me **prior** to missing a class, assignments missed due to excused absences must be completed by the next class session or a grade of zero will be assigned. **No in-class assignments or quizzes can be made up.** Students are responsible for completing all assignments before the last class meets on Dec. 3. **Simply put, if you miss more than three classes, you could have your final grade reduced or even fail this course.**

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITY

Students are expected to follow the University Student Affairs Policy on Academic Responsibility in completing the work and assignments in this public relations writing course. The Rules of Academic Responsibility can be found in the University's Student Handbook and Policy Guide. Simply stated, it is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty, fraud or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this rule or who knowingly assists another to violate this rule shall be subject to disciplinary action.

AGENDA

Week 1 (Aug. 25, 27)

Introduction to public relations and persuasion writing, communications theory, news judgment. (Chapters 1 and 2)

Week 2 (Aug. 29 – 31)

Tools of the public relations professional, AP style, fact sheets (Chapter 8)

Week 3 (Sept. 1 – no class, 3)

News releases and feature stories. (Chapters 9 and 10)

Week 4 (Sept. 8, 10)

News conferences, pitch letters, press kits. (Chapter 9)

Week 5 (Sept. 15, 17)

Quiz #1. Photos and graphics. (Chapter 7)

Week 6 (Sept. 22, 24)

Radio, TV and Webcasting. (Chapter 11)

Week 7 (Sept. 29, Oct. 1)

PR distribution methods. (Chapter 8)

Week 8 (Oct. 6, 8)

Media Relations. (Chapter 9)

Week 9 (Oct. 13, 15)

Other print media public relations opportunities. (Chapter 10)

Week 10 (Oct. 20, 22)

Quiz #2, Writing for the World Wide Web. (Chapter 13)

Week 11 (Oct. 27, 29)

Direct mail, letters, e-mail, annual reports. (Chapters 14 and 15)

Week 12 (Nov. 3, 5)

Speakers and speeches, audio visual aids. (Chapter 11)

Week 13 (Nov. 10, 12)

Special events, program planning. (Chapter 16)

Week 14 (Nov. 17, 19)

Intranet writing. (Chapter 13)

Week 15 (Nov. 24, 26 – no class)

Field trip, if time permits. Guest lectures.

Week 16 (Dec. 1, 3)

Media kit oral presentations, class evaluations. No final exam.