

Journalism 436: Public Relations Writing

Fall 2008

Monday Wednesday Friday

Section 2 — 10:10 - 11 a.m., Coliseum 3012

Section 1 — 11:15 a.m. - 12:05 p.m., Coliseum 3008

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Office Hours

Monday, Wednesday 2 – 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday: 10 – 11 a.m.

or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an applied writing skills laboratory. We will cover major communications tools of the public relations profession, including news releases, features, speeches, pitch letters, fact sheets, public service announcements, special events, annual reports and more. We also will study applicable theory, models and research methods.

Course Goals

You will develop and demonstrate proficiency in writing a variety of public relations materials typically used to influence an organization's internal and external publics or audiences.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- quickly and accurately produce the professional written materials required in the public relations trade
- integrate strategy and theory into communications pieces to target appropriate audiences and media
- demonstrate the ability to use language to enhance audience perception of an organization
- demonstrate a working knowledge of Associated Press style
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Prerequisites

To take this course, you must have completed Journalism 202, Writing for Mass Communication, and Journalism 328, Principles of Public Relations.

Required Texts

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

The Associated Press Style Book and Libel Manual

Suggested Materials

A dictionary and a thesaurus, in addition to the tools on your computer, will help you as you write. On occasion, I will ask you to read *The State*, *The Greenville News*, *The Post and Courier* and other South Carolina newspapers, as well as other publications and Web sites.

Policies

Please complete reading assignments before you come to class. Also, please bring your textbook and your stylebook to class with you. We'll use them daily.

Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Student Affairs Policy on Academic Responsibility in completing assignments for this course. The Rule of Academic Responsibility can be found in the Student Handbook & Policy Guide. Students who violate academic policy will be subject to discipline. The University of South Carolina's academic honesty policy allows no tolerance for cheating on tests, quizzes and homework, falsification of information or citations, facilitating or assisting someone else's academic dishonesty, or plagiarism. In addition, the use of your own work that you completed for another class is not acceptable and is considered a type plagiarism.

All work **must** be typed and double-spaced. Please be sure your name and the date are at the top of each page. Correct grammar and punctuation are essential. See grading guidelines. Your in-class assignments will be under deadline pressure. Assignments are due on the dates specified, without exception. Late assignments are subject to a penalty of 10 points a day. You may have the opportunity to revise your work if you earn a C or lower. Turn in your original assignment attached to the revision. The revision is due the next class period. If your rewrite earns a higher grade, I'll average the two scores. Be sure you fix everything, not just what I've marked. I sometimes miss — or do not mark — mistakes the first time around, but I'll probably catch them the second time.

Attendance

Attendance is critical in any college course, but in a writing class, it is essential. Missing more than two classes may result in a failing grade. And because we evaluate and discuss in-class assignments during the class periods, missing even one class can affect your grade adversely. Please discuss extenuating circumstances with me if you must miss a class. It is your responsibility to keep up with all assignments. I will deduct points even if your absence is excused, and you will not be able to make up class work if your absence is not excused.

Please note that attendance is 15 percent of your semester grade. You are responsible for material and information discussed in any class session you miss, including announcements and schedule changes. I suggest you find a partner now to gather handouts for you if you must miss a class, and you can do the same for that person. I give handouts frequently and I often base your assignments on those handouts. You will be allowed to make up exams and quizzes only if your absence is excused, with documentation.

We may have guest speakers during the semester, and I base assignments on their presentations. Please do not miss classes when we have guests. They are very busy professionals who are volunteering their time to share their knowledge and expertise with you.

Grading

Please note that you **will** lose points for incorrect style, grammar, spelling and punctuation, among other things, on all your work. I distribute helpful materials throughout the semester, and I expect you to read them and follow the rules and suggestions in them. For instance, you'll receive a Style Guide to Journalism 436, and it outlines some specific things for you to know — and specific things I look for when I'm grading your work. I'll figure your final grade based on the following percentages:

Class and homework assignments 30%

Project: 30%

Tests and quizzes: 25%

Attendance and participation: 15%

My grading scale is slightly different from others. Please be sure to make note of it. The University allows final semester grades to include B+, C+ and D+.

- A** 93-100 — Work is of professional quality, acceptable in a professional setting
- B** 86-92 — Work is good but needs editing
- C** 78-85 — Quality of work is weak and needs major editing
- D** 70-77 — Work needs complete rewrite
- F** 69 or below — Unacceptable

Class Schedule

The schedule may vary depending on mastery of topics. We will have in-class or homework writing assignments virtually every day. We also may do peer-editing at any time, so please be prepared. I will make reading assignments as we progress; please have the chapters read before you come to class. We also will have a number of guest speakers, and I will base assignments and projects on their presentations. Many of them will work with you in class on your writing skills, so it is especially important to be in class when we have guest speakers.

August 21

- Get acquainted, review syllabus

August 25

- Public relations definition and functions

August 27

- Using the AP Stylebook

August 29

- Using the AP Stylebook

September 1

NO CLASS—Labor Day

September 3

AP style quiz

September 5

- Theories of mass communication
- Public relations theory

September 8

Public relations strategy, models

September 10

- News releases — basics

September 12

Writing in class

September 15

- More about releases

September 17

- Identifying distribution

September 19

Writing in class

September 22

- Identifying placement opportunities

September 24

- Feature stories and releases

September 26

Writing in class

September 29

- Media relations, etiquette

October 1

- News conferences

October 3

Writing in class

October 6

- Crisis communications

October 8

- More crisis communications

October 10

NO CLASS—Fall Break

October 13

- Pitch letters, calls

October 15

- Press kits
- Fact sheets, backgrounders

October 17

Writing in class

October 20

• Internal communications

October 22

• Newsletters, corporate magazines, brochures

October 24

Writing in class

October 27

• Speeches, speakers' bureaus•

October 29

• Special events planning; creating a public relations plan

October 31

Writing in class

November 3

• More public relations planning

November 5

Test

November 7

Writing in class

November 10

• Converged media

November 12

• Converged media

November 14

Writing in class

November 17

• Evaluation methods

November 19

• More about evaluation methods

November 21

Writing in class

November 24

Work on projects in class

November 26

NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break

November 28

NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break

December 1

ALL projects due

Project presentations

December 3

Project presentations

December 5

Project presentations