

Public Relations Writing

PBRL 3421-001

9:10-11:10AM, MW

206 MJ

Instructor: Kim Marks, APR

Office: Meeman Journalism Building, Room 332

Office hours: Monday & Wednesday, 1 -2 p.m.; Tuesday & Thursday, 10 – 11 a.m.;

Other times by appointment

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS**CATALOG DESCRIPTION**

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

PREREQUISITES

JRSM 2121, PBRL 3400

TEXTBOOKS

Newsom, D., & Haynes, J. (2015). *Public relations writing: Strategies & structures* (11th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. ISBN: 978-305-50000-6

The Associated Press Stylebook 2018 (or 2017). New York: Basic Books.

MEDIA DIET:

As you know, the very nature of our profession requires us to stay on top of today's happenings. Our responsibility is to assess their relevance to – and their implications for – our clients and employers. Knowledge of current events, government, history and media is becoming more and more crucial. While your undergraduate education will provide a strong base of understanding in these areas, your proactive efforts to continue learning about them will greatly benefit your career. Continue to feed your media diet with a good mix of traditional, specialized and Internet news sources.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

The class will include lecture, discussion, and in-class activities. I prefer to have a very casual and informal environment in which we can learn about public relations through group discussions and applications. We are fortunate this class is small enough that we will have the opportunity to get to know one another. There will be plenty of time in this class to converse with other students in group discussions.

I ask that you not talk during lectures, and please, unless we are using them for a class activity, **turn off all cell phones and put them away during class.** If I see you text-messaging, playing games, or browsing on your phone during class, you may be asked to leave and be given an absence for the day. Please also refrain from checking your email and personal social media accounts during class.

Class Participation

This class is hands-on, and we will all benefit from class discussions and our collaborative efforts in our study of communication tactics; public relations tools; audience and media selection; and print and electronic media.

Your class participation and collaboration not only are appreciated, but they also are expected.

Class participation will be graded on a class day by class day basis. Your participation assessment is based on the extent that I can see that you are “getting it” and keeping current with the assigned readings and assignments. Toward this objective, please come to class prepared and ready to respond if called upon.

Class (Closed) Facebook Page

Every member of class is expected to be a member of and participate in discussions on the class Facebook page. More details on this will be provided separately.

DEADLINES:

Understanding and working with deadlines is a critical part of the public relations process. **No late assignments will be accepted.**

QUALITY OF WORK:

I expect your work to be good and to be yours. What is not yours should be fully cited. In documenting sources, you should use APA formatting (both internal and external). If you need help with writing and citing sources, please see me for resources. In addition, Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource, and can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

I am always willing to help you. Always ask for clarification(s) if you have any questions or doubts: the sooner the better. Email typically is not the best way to connect with me to discuss course material. Email is good for when you have administrative questions, not for when you are having difficulty understanding the course material. Hence, I strongly recommend that you make use of office hours. I look forward to working with you!

STUDENT RESOURCES

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, please visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. If you are comfortable doing so, please also let the instructor know you are experiencing challenges as they may be able to assist you in connecting with campus or community supports.

GRADING

Unless otherwise specified, WE WILL USE AP STYLE ON ALL ASSIGNMENTS. Do not assume you will remember everything from earlier courses. This is required not to torture you, but to help you prepare for what is expected of you in a professional setting. When an assignment calls for secondary sources, use APA style for in-text citations and the reference list.

If you are not already on Twitter, or if you want to set up a separate professional account for the purposes of this class, you need to set up an account with a bio and a photo and post your “handle” or Twitter user name on the class discussion board. At a minimum, you need to follow me and your classmates. I will also post additional suggestions of accounts for you to follow. If you are new to Twitter or haven’t used it much, start getting into the habit of both posting and browsing your stream a little at least once a day. Write down any questions you may have about using Twitter and we can discuss in class. One of your assignments this semester is to participate in a Twitter chat and create a Twitter Moment to recap the chat.

You are also required to update your online portfolio to showcase your work and continue to build your professional online presence. Specific requirements and details will be provided separately.

Assignments

Class participation	100 points
Twitter handle discussion post	10 points

Lab Assignments

Example PR product discussion	20 points
Media Contact List	15 points
Influencer List	15 points
Twitter List	15 points
Content Calendar	15 points
Blogger Pitch	15 points

Writing Assignments

Fact sheet	75 points
News release	75 points
Blog	80 points
Position paper	75 points
Brochure	75 points
Social media news release	80 points

Personal Branding

Resume	25 points
Linked-In activity	25 points
Mid-term portfolio review	30 points
Final portfolio	50 points

PR Tools & Tactics

Twitter Chat & Twitter Moment Reflection	50 points
Hootsuite Certificate	50 points
PR Tool Tutorial & Trending Topic	125 points

Total **1,025 points**

A+ 992-1025	B+ 892-924	C+ 792-824	D+ 692-724
A 959-991	B 839-891	C 759-791	D 659-691
A- 925-958	B- 825-838	C- 725-758	D- 625-658
			F Below 625

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

This is a basic schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. Although every effort will be made to stick with this schedule, please understand that changes to the schedule may occur. All changes will be announced as soon as they are known.

Note: Readings will be discussed on the dates noted. Complete the readings *prior to* class.

Week One	Welcome to PR Writing!	
Jan. 14	Course outline & expectations PR Tool Tutorial & Trending Topic	- Sign up for PR Tool Tutorial topic (presentations begin March 18) - Pick organization (DUE Jan. 23 as discussion post) - Post Twitter handle (DUE Jan. 23)
Jan. 16	Hootsuite Certification & personal branding Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LinkedIn Profile Checklist (eCourseware) - Welcome to Hootsuite (eCourseware) 	- Hootsuite Certification (DUE April 24) - LinkedIn activity (DUE March 13) - Portfolio (mid-term review DUE March 18; final DUE April 22)
Week Two	PR Writing Role	
Jan. 21	NO CLASS – MLK DAY	
Jan. 23	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 1 PR & the Writer - How to Write a Fact Sheet (eCourseware) 	- Fact Sheet (DUE Jan. 30) DUE: Twitter Handle (discussion post) DUE: Organization (discussion post)
Week Three	Persuasion & Writing Principles	
Jan. 28	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 7 Writing to Persuade - Resume Writing Resources (eCourseware) 	- Resume (DUE Feb. 6) - Example PR writing discussion (DUE Jan. 30)
Jan. 30	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 3 Writing to Clarify & Simplify the Complex: Style & Content - CH 4 GSP 	DUE: Fact Sheet (in Dropbox) - PR Writing example discussion

Week Four	Research & Environmental Scanning	
Feb. 4	NO CLASS	
Feb. 6	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH6 Research for the PR Writer - Twitter Chat Resources (eCourseware) - How to conduct a social media audit (eCourseware) - Review social media audit examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Twitter Chat & Twitter Moment Reflection (DUE March 11 as discussion post) - Extra Credit Opportunity – Social Media Audit (DUE April 15) DUE: Resume (in Dropbox)
Week Five	Media & Blogger Relations	
Feb. 11	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH8 pgs. 165-169 (Media Pitches) - CH 9 pgs. 179-190 (News Releases) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Media contact list - Influencer list - News Release (DUE Feb. 20)
Feb. 13	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blogger Outreach Guide (eCourseware) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blogger Pitch - Blog (DUE Feb. 27)
Week Six	Portfolio Workshop (Tentative)	
Feb. 18		
Feb. 20		DUE: News Release (in Dropbox)
Week Seven	Writing for Social Media	
Feb. 25	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CH 5 Social Media Writing - Social Media Post Length for Every Platform (eCourseware) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content Calendar
Feb. 27	Review: Fig. 9.2, pg. 183	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Twitter list - Social Media News Release (DUE March 25) DUE: Blog (in Dropbox)
Week Eight	NO CLASS! Spring Break	

Week Nine	Brochures & Position Papers	
March 11	Read: - CH 12 pgs. 275-294 (Brochures)	- Brochure (DUE March 27) DUE: Twitter Chat & Twitter Moment Reflection (discussion post)
March 13	Read: TBD (Position Paper)	- Position Paper (DUE April 1)
Week 10	Organizational Voice	
March 18	Read: - Resources for Organization Voice (eCourseware) - Example of Voice & Tone Guides (eCourseware)	- Presentations TBD DUE: Mid-term portfolio (link in Dropbox)
March 20		- Presentations TBD
Week 11	Internal (Employee) Communication	
March 25	Read: TBD (eCourseware)	- Presentations TBD
March 27	CH 11 Newsletters	- Presentations TBD DUE: Brochure (in Dropbox & hard copy in class)
Week 12	Ethics & Legal Responsibilities	
April 1	Read: - CH 2 Ethical & Legal Responsibilities of the PR Writer	- Presentations TBD DUE: Position Paper (in Dropbox)
April 3		- Presentations TBD
Week 13	TBD – Catch up Week	
April 8		- Presentations TBD
April 10		- Presentations TBD
Week 14	Crisis Communication	
April 15	Read: - CH 14 Crisis Communication	DUE: Extra Credit Opportunity – Social Media Audit (in Dropbox)
April 17		
Week 15	Wrap Up	
April 22		DUE: Final portfolio (link in Dropbox)
April 24	Last Day of Class	

FIVE PILLARS OF PBRL3421

- *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:* Students focus on writing for a variety of public relations formats, including press releases, position or white papers, fact sheets, press conference statements, brochures and newsletters, various social media platforms, and feature releases. Students 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 communicate their message to a target audience.
- *Media Literacy:* Students learn how to engage with both traditional and social media; how relationships and communities are built within these channels; and how to choose the appropriate media channels based on their desired target audience.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR PBRL3421

- 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 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.
- 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 current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

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

- Recognize the importance of understanding the diversity (gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) of stakeholder groups and audience to developing content for public relations products and appropriate channels to reach the target audience.
- Explain how the writer's purpose, intended public and requirements of the medium affect style and content.
- Recognize legal and ethical problems associated with public relations writing, including within the freedoms of speech and the press.
- Recognize potential problems and solutions in media relations.
- Understand the differences between writing for various mediums.
- Evaluate their own and other's public relations writing for accuracy, clarity, grammatical correctness and appropriate use of AP style, as well as suitability for specified medium.
- Understand how to use appropriate software and hardware to create public relations products, as well as how to effectively utilize social media channels to communicate with the target audience.

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

- Earn a passing score on written assignments, quizzes and exams.
- Identify an organization's stakeholders and target audiences and the channels that can be used to communicate and engage with them.
- Identify appropriate images/graphics to accompany public relations products based on medium, platform and target audience.
- Identify common legal and ethical problems associated with public relations writing.
- Write a press release, position or white paper, fact sheet, press conference statement, brochure and newsletter for an organization and assemble a press kit, including required images and graphics.
- Apply Associated Press guidelines to written public relations materials.
- Proofread and edit their own work and the work of others.
- Create public relations products using appropriate software and hardware ensuring that products are formatted correctly selected media channels.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET:

Awareness:

- Learn the important role of writing in public relations, including journalistic news values, AP style and the various forms of writing for different media.
- Learn about the importance of understanding the diversity and cultural differences of an organization's stakeholders and target audience when developing public relations content.

- Learn about the ethical and legal problems associated with public relations writing.
- Learn about the different public relations products, which tools are used to create them, and what media each is best suited for.

Understanding:

- Understand how to be strategic in public relations writing.
- Recognize how the diversity and cultural difference of an organization's stakeholders and target audience inform the development of public relations content.
- Recognize potential ethical and legal problems associated with public relations writing.
- Understand how to proofread their own and other's writing for clarity, grammatical correctness and appropriate use of AP style.
- Understand which public relations products are appropriate based on the platform and how to create specific public relations products.

Application:

- Identify an organization's stakeholders and target audiences and the channels that can be used to communicate and engage with them.
- Write a press release, position or white paper, fact sheet, press conference statement, brochure and newsletter for an organization and assemble a press kit, including required images and graphics.
- Proofread and edit their own work and the work of others for clarity, grammatical correctness and appropriate use of AP style.
- Create public relations products using appropriate software and hardware ensuring that products are formatted correctly selected media channels.

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files, and writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

EMAIL:

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

COURSE REPETITION:

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

In addition to University-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism/mass media class, students are expected to comply with copyright law and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

“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)

ONLINE SETEs:

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

DISABILITY:

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall 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. Media reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

WEATHER POLICY:

Always 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.

STUDENT SUPPORT:

Student who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.