

# Public Relations Writing

PBRL 3421-M50

Fall 2021

eCourseware/Online

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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.

### Textbooks

The Public Relations Writer's Handbook. Lehmann, W. (2020). New York: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-8153-6528-0 eBook ISBN: 978-1-3512-6192-0

The Associated Press Stylebook 2020. New York: Basic Books ISBN: 978-0-917360-69-5

^You can also access The AP Stylebook as an online publication or through an app. Get details about these options online at [apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com). There are many ways to access AP through online searches as well.

Other readings will be assigned and posted to eCourseware.

### Classroom format

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. In other words, we have no scheduled meeting time. This can be convenient for you, but it also means that it is essential for you to be an organized, motivated student.

You must have internet access and Microsoft Word to generate a ".doc" or ".docx" extension. All assignments MUST be filed in a ".doc" or ".docx" format; type must be double-spaced with indented paragraphs.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis home page: <http://www.memphis.edu>
2. Click on the "MyMemphis" link at the bottom of the left column menu.
3. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
4. Click on the "eCampus Resources" tab.
5. In the center column of the page, click on the blue UofM eCourseware link

6. Down on that page, in the FALL 2021 course list available to you, click on the link for PBRL 3421 - M50 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

### **Students with disabilities & accommodations**

If you will need accommodations through [Disability Resources](#) to meet any of the requirements of this course, please let me know as soon as possible. Remember, this does not mean you are incapable or receiving special treatment. We all have specific tools we use to do our best work. I encourage you to consider which tools you need to be your best in this class.

### **Trauma & emotional needs**

This class is just one component of your life. It is important, but sometimes we experience trauma and crisis, and we need to reprioritize. As your instructor, I feel your health and well-being is more important than this class, especially under the circumstances. If completing this course or an assignment to the best of your abilities is challenging, please let me know as soon as possible. I am here for you and want to work with you.

### **COVID-19 illness accommodations**

I hope that this is the most worthless syllabus section I've ever written. I hope that COVID-19 comes nowhere near you or your loved ones, and doesn't affect you in any way, including physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially, and mentally. COVID-19 will likely affect one of us in one of those ways, however. Here's how we'll adapt:

#### **If you get sick:**

I recommend you take an incomplete for the semester. Given that it's hard to know how your body will react, and cases range from asymptomatic to months of illness to death, we should prepare for you to dedicate a substantial amount of your time to feeling better. Your health is more important than this course. *Honor code: no documentation required.*

#### **If you need to take care of someone who gets sick:**

Depending on the severity of their illness, I recommend you consider taking an incomplete. If you are the primary caretaker of someone who tests positive for COVID-19 with symptoms, your priority should be remaining healthy and supporting that person. *Honor code: no documentation required.*

#### **If you are exposed to someone who tests positive:**

You must isolate and monitor your symptoms. Please let me know as soon as possible if that affects your access to resources and technology. *Honor code: no documentation required.*

### **Resources specific to physical health and wellness:**

[Mental health Services](#)

[UofM Student Health Center](#)

[Sexual, domestic, and intimate partner violence resources](#)

### **Financial resources :**

There are many resources available through the Dean of Students including:

[Dr. Rosie Phillips Bingham Student Emergency Fund](#)

[Emergency Food Resources](#), which includes [Tiger Pantry](#)

Emergency Housing  
Specific COVID-19 relief funds

### Course intentions

As a writing-focused class, our mission is to use strategic writing to tell our clients' stories. While considering the big picture (what's going on in our communities, nation, and world) and combining that with a commitment to targeting and understanding audiences, conducting solid primary and secondary research, and building strong relationships; we will use our strategic storytelling tools to develop news releases, infographics, media kits, and other strategic writing tools.

For this fall class, you will have a client and this organization will serve as the inspiration for every assignment (with exceptions to the personal branding work).

Course work will be accomplished every week. Each assignment must be completed by its due date and time, which is Sunday at 11:59 p.m. CT unless otherwise noted.

Your grade will come from writing and submitting assignments on behalf of your client, AP and current events quizzes, and personal development and networking exercises. These assignments must be submitted per instructions; no credit will be given outside of the proper submission guidelines.

### Grading

A+ = 97-100%; A = 93-96%; A- = 90-92%  
B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82%  
C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-76%; C- = 70-72%  
D+ = 67-69%; D = 60-66%  
F 0-59%

### Plagiarism policy

*First offense:* Redo for 50%, plus meet with Teri

*Second offense:* Automatic 0, no redo

*Third offense:* Automatic class fail

*Final assignment, regardless of which offense:* Automatic 0 on assignment

### Citation policy

For this class, we'll use AP Style (<https://www.apstylebook.com>) and APA style ([https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)).

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar and language. A large part of public relations is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. This includes all class work and presentations. 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. In documenting sources, you must use APA formatting. 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>.

### Late work

<24 hours late: -10% (perfect = 90% A)  
24-48 hours late: -20% (perfect = 80% B)  
48-72 hours late: -30% (perfect = 70% C)  
Final call: Up to 50% credit (perfect = 50% F)

### Your deliverables

<b>PR writing assignments</b>	<b>(50 Points)</b>
Fact sheet	10 points
Media pitch	10 points
News release #1	20 points
News release #2	10 points
<b>Personal branding &amp; networking</b>	<b>(10 points)</b>
Email exercise	5 points
Personal bio	5 points
<b>Engagement</b>	<b>(30 points)</b>
AP style & current event quizzes (10)	20 points
Intro/outro check-in	10 points
<b>Public relations in practice</b>	<b>(10 points with 5 points available for extra credit)</b>
Twitter chat participation + reflection	5 points (up to 15 points)
Event attendance + reflection	5 points (up to 15 points)
Discussion board participation	1 point/thread/week (up to 15 points)
PRSSA PRogression blog	5 points for submission + 5 for publication
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 points</b>

### Assignments Details

This is a quick breakdown of grading approaches:

**AP style and current quizzes.** There will be AP (Associated Press) style and current event quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes will open no later than Monday of its assigned week and will be available for until the following Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Within that one week period, you may take the quiz unlimited amount of times to earn your ideal grade. Once the quiz is closed, it is closed for the rest of the semester.

**Intro/outro check-in.** These two assignments are introductory surveys (intro) and semester reflection (outro). These are credit/no credit, which means as long as you complete the assignment on time you will get full credit. These are exempt from the late policy.

**Writing assignments.** The writing assignments required in this class are fundamental strategic communication tactics that are relevant to more than just PR majors. You will be provided the

opportunity to resubmit your work at least once to earn a better grade. Each assignment will include an opportunity for feedback before you submit your draft.

**Public relations in practice.** The goal for these assignments are to get you engaging and thinking about how to take what you're learning in this class and apply it. I have provided an á la carte approach, where you can pick and choose how you would like to earn these 10 points. For example, you may go to a PR or PR-adjacent event and submit a reflection (five points), participate in a Twitter chat and submit a reflection (five points), and contribute three times to the discussion board (three points). This will satisfy your "public relations in practice" requirement (10 points) and earn you an additional three points of extra credit.

You have the whole semester to complete these. Discussion board posts *must* be submitted within two weeks of my initial post (e.g., week 3 discussion board must be completed no later than week 5).

Three Twitter chats = 15 points (10 points fulfilled, five points extra credit)

Three events = 15 points (10 points fulfilled, five points extra credit)

15 discussion board weeks = 15 points (10 points fulfilled, five points extra credit)

## COVID-19 protocols for this course

### Student Health

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at [deanofstudents@memphis.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@memphis.edu) or 901.678.2187.

### Student Resources

Students who need additional resources can visit the Dean of Students Office website at <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php>.

## COURSE 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 possible. All assignments are due on Sunday at 11:59 p.m. C.T. unless otherwise noted. We will start each week on Monday.

### *Week 1, August 23: Course Introduction / What is PR writing?*

Readings: Chapter 1

Assignments: Get to know you survey due 8/29

### *Week 2, August 30: Understanding your organization*

Readings: Chapter 8

Assignments: Team contract due 9/5

AP/current events quiz #1 due 9/5

NOTE: September 5 is the LAST DAY TO DROP.

*Week 3, September 6: Media Relations: Understanding newsworthiness & storytelling*

Monday, 9/6: Labor Day

Readings: Chapter 11

Assignments: AP/current events quiz #2 due 9/12

*Week 4, September 13: Media Relations: Understanding newsworthiness & storytelling*

Readings: Chapter 11

Assignments: AP/current events quiz #3 due 9/21 to acknowledge those who celebrate Rosh Hashanah

Happy Rosh Hashanah (Sept. 18-20)

*Week 5, September 20: Fact sheets*

Readings: Chapter 9

Assignments: Fact sheet outline + goals due 9/26  
AP/current events quiz #4

Yom Kippur (Sept. 27-28)

*Week 6, September 27: Media pitches*

Readings: Chapter 3

Assignments: Pitch outline + goals due 10/3  
AP/current events quiz #5

*Week 7, October 4: News releases*

Readings: Chapter 2

Assignments: AP/current events quiz #6

*Week 8, October 11: Fall Break & Recovery Week*

Recovery week: No class, no assignments, no readings for the full week.

NOTE: October 15 is the last day to WITHDRAW (Courses dropped during this period will have "W" grades assigned and will appear on your transcript. Courses cannot be dropped online after this period).

*Week 9, October 18: News releases continued*

Readings: Chapter 2

Assignments: Pitch due 10/24  
Find news release due 10/24

*Week 10, October 25: Social media*

Readings: Chapter 14

Assignments: Critique news releases due 10/31  
Fact sheet due 10/31  
AP/current events quiz #7

*Week 11, November 1: Emails & writing for the web*

Readings: Chapter 13  
Assignments: Outline and pitch news release due 11/7  
AP/current events quiz #8

*Week 12, November 8: Letters & memos*

Readings: Chapter 15  
Assignments: News release #1 due 11/14  
AP/current events quiz #9

*Week 13, November 15: Bios*

Readings: Chapter 10  
Assignments: Peer feedback on news release due 11/21  
Email due 11/21  
AP/current events quiz #10

*Week 14, November 22: Recovery week & Thanksgiving break*

Recovery week: No class, no assignments, no readings for the full week.

*Week 15, November 29: Last week*

Last full day: Dec. 1  
Study Day: Dec. 2  
Assignments: Late/missing/redos due Dec. 1 at 11:59 p.m. This is late policy exempt.  
Bio due 12/1

*Exams week: December 3-9, 2021*

Assignments: News release #2 due Sunday, Dec. 5  
Public relations in practice due 12/5  
Outro due 12/5

Happy Hanukkah! (Dec. 10-18)

Merry Christmas! (Dec. 25)

Happy New Year!