Public Relations Writing

PBRL 3421-M90

Spring 2022

Professor: Tori Cliff
Office Hours: MW 2:15-4:15 p.m. virtual by appointment
Email: tmcliff@memphis.edu
Schedule an Appointment: Click here

Catalog Description

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

Prerequisites

JRSM 2121, PBRL 3400

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

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
*Available in hard copy or eBook. eBook is available for rent via Amazon for approximately $25

The Associated Press Stylebook 2019 (or 2018). New York: Basic Books
ISBN: 978-0-917360-68-8
*You can also access *The AP Stylebook* as an online publication or through an app. Get details about these options online at apstylebook.com

Other readings will be assigned and posted to Canvas.

Classroom Format

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. In other words, there is no required scheduled meeting time for this course. This can be convenient for students juggling several responsibilities, but it also means you must be organized and motivated. Students are able to work at their own pace throughout the week, however work will be due on a weekly basis, and it is imperative to stay on track with the course schedule to complete all work on time. The course content is organized by week. Students should complete each week's work by the Sunday concluding that week NLT 11:59 p.m. CST. I advise students to use a physical planner and set notifications on their tech for all deadlines. This helps me stay on track.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page:
    http://memphis.instructure.com
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Spring 2022 course list available to you, click on the link for PBRL 3421-M90 to enter.

Course Requirements & Expectations

Weekly Folder Content. Each week of the semester has a folder in Canvas that contains that week's content. You are responsible for all content within each week's folder.

Software and Internet Needs.
You must have Internet access and Microsoft Word for this class. All work must be submitted in .doc/.docx format unless otherwise indicted in the assignment spec. As a UM student, you have free access to Office 365, which includes programs like Word, PowerPoint, Excel and free cloud space through OneDrive. Click here to learn more. Backup all your work in a cloud space such as OneDrive or Google Drive and then perhaps on a thumb drive. Better yet just create your work within the cloud. If you work straight from the cloud, the chances of losing your work are miniscule since autosave is a feature. Google Drive automatically saves changes as you work, and OneDrive has a toggle on/off autosave located at the top left of the screen.

Some assignments will need to be completed using a design program such as Canva, Adobe Spark, or Adobe InDesign. Canva and Adobe Spark can be accessed for free online. Adobe InDesign or Adobe Illustrator can be accessed using University software and in some University labs. Click here for more details. Design projects will need to be in .PDF or .PNG format depending on the assignment. Read each assignment spec carefully in order to submit the correct file type.

Activities. Each activity must be completed by Sundays at 11:59 p.m. central standard time on the weeks they are due except for the final week of classes. The semester ends on Tuesday, April 27 and so all work for that week will need to be submitted NLT 11:59 p.m. on that Tuesday. These assignments will vary in nature, and assignment sheets will need to be read carefully for instructions. If specs aren't adhered to, the item may not be graded. All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar and language.

The work you create in this course should be professional and ready for publication, which means it is well-written, suits the purpose it was created for, has been thoroughly edited, AP style is spot on, and it meets the requirements and formatting outlined for each assignment. NEVER submit work that has not been properly edited and polished. If a piece is riddled with errors or shows a disregard for quality work, it will not be copyedited by the professor, and instead returned for a grade of zero.

Writing Process and Feedback. Writing is a skill. As with skills-based items, you learn about how to do it, then you do it. Repeatedly. That is how you (and anyone else) becomes a better writer. It also helps to read great writing. In this public relations writing-focused class, our mission is to use strategic writing to tell our clients' stories. This adds an additional layer to the writing process.

In order to create these pieces, you will need to gain inspiration and insight from course content, current events, and by considering the big picture—what are you really trying to say and do with each piece? Also, the writing should always be relevant, audience specific, timely, and culturally appropriate. Research will be required as you seek to understand and build relationships with audiences.

Written work will be submitted once and graded. Resubmission will not be utilized in our learning process. You will receive feedback on each piece. It may come in the form of rubric grading, track changes, hard copy edits using AP editing marks, or audio feedback recording. Use the feedback to

improve your writing. If it appears that you are not using the feedback provided, and the same mistakes continue to occur, additional points will be deducted. If you do not understand the feedback that you receive, feel free to reach out to me for clarification.

Communication. Email will be the official communication channel used in class. Email me ASAP if you are experiencing trouble or have questions at tmcliff@memphis.edu. We will also use Marco Polo. Download the free app, and then text me at 731.803.2345 saying "Hi I am (name) in PR Writing." I will then add you to a PR Writing Group on Marco Polo. It is a quick, personalized, refreshing way to communicate. Please do not text/call my personal phone after this initial message unless I explicitly ask you to do so. I will do my best to respond to messages received during the workweek within 2 days, and those sent over the weekend as soon as I am able. If you would like to book an appointment with me via phone or Zoom, use this link to schedule it.

Hootsuite Certification. As part of this class you will be required to earn your Hootsuite Platform Certification. The Hootsuite Platform Certification is industry-recognized and demonstrates your expertise with the social media management platform Hootsuite. The normal cost of this certification is $99 but as a member of this class, you will be able to access the training materials and the exam FREE. Details about this process will be provided separately. The Hootsuite Certification will be worth 100 points.

Discussion forum. There will be a discussion board created for students to communicate with each other. This is optional but is there if you want to use it. It will not be monitored by your professor. If any discussion prompts happen to be added by your professor for a grade, there will be a link with instructions within that week's content folder.

Portfolio. You will be required to update your online portfolio to showcase your work and to continue to build your professional online presence. See specific requirements below in department policy section of syllabus. You will be required to submit a link to your portfolio end of semester.

Quizzes. There may be quizzes throughout the semester if it appears that the class is not keeping up with the readings and progressing in knowledge and skill-level, or if sloppy work that doesn't adhere to AP style is being submitted. If the class stays on top of all the content and shows appropriate growth, and uses the AP manual in all written pieces, it will allow us to put our focus on writing and building a strong portfolio and forego quizzes. However, if quizzes become necessary, they will be listed in the course calendar, and there will be a link to complete them within that week's folder content. Quizzes must be completed the week that they are assigned by Sunday night at 11:59 p.m. (CST). Quizzes are timed and you must complete the quiz in the time allotted. You will have two attempts for each quiz.

Grading
Each item submitted is worth 100 possible points.

The grading is categorical percentage based as such:

PR activities: 65%
Additional assignments/exercises/quizzes/discussion posts: 25%
Portfolio: 5%
Hootsuite certification: 5%

A: 100-90%
B: 89-80%
C: 79-70%
D: 69-60%
F: 59-0%

Grading Philosophy

A=Professional quality work that could be used with little or no modification

B=Good to excellent work and exceeds requirement, but would require revision to be used professionally

C=Satisfactory work and adequately meets requirement, but would need significant revision

D=Barely satisfies minimum requirement and below average quality

F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirement

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**).

If you are including information from outside sources, you need to include full citations in APA formatting. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource and can be found at http://owl.english.purdue.edu.

Plagiarism policy

First offense: Redo for 50%, discussion of ethics and department expectations

Second offense: Automatic 0, no redo, report filed with department

Third offense: Automatic class fail and report filed with department

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. I'm happy to work with you to provide the tools you need to succeed in this course.

Stress, coursework, the pandemic, and resources

I understand that the past couple of years has been extremely challenging, and that balancing school, work, and other responsibilities can be difficult. The events of the world have been heavy, and I know many are carrying much more stress than normal. If you start to feel yourself falling behind or feeling overwhelmed for any reason, please don't hesitate to reach out. I'm happy to work with you to find solutions that help you succeed.

If you find yourself or your family affected by COVID-19, please let me know as soon as you are able, and we will make alternate solutions for coursework so that you are first able to focus on you and your loved ones getting healthy.

Also, the University of Memphis offers a number of excellent resources that you may find helpful in several different situations. Below are some links that you may find helpful:

Counseling and Mental Health: Mental health Services

Health & Corona Virus Information: UofM Student Health Center

Sexual, domestic, and intimate partner violence resources

Dr. Rosie Phillips Bingham Student Emergency Fund

Emergency Food Resources, which includes Tiger Pantry

Emergency Housing

Specific COVID-19 relief funds

Course Schedule

This is a tentative schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. Although we will try 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, Jan. 18 – 23: Purpose, Process, Style, Form and Tone

This week we will explore Week 1 content in Canvas.

Readings: Chapter 1; Check Canvas

Assignments: Acclimate to course content / Create Marco Polo account and text Prof. Cliff / Read, view, listen to any content within Week 1 content in Canvas / Work on Master Media List

Week 2, Jan. 24 – 30: News Releases and Other Types of Releases

This week we will explore Week 2 content in Canvas.

Readings: Chapters 2; Check Canvas

Assignments: Master Media List Due / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 2 folder in Canvas.

Week 3, Jan. 31- Feb. 6: Media Pitches

This week we will explore Week 3 content in Canvas.

Readings: Chapters 3; Check Canvas

Assignments: Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 3 folder in Canvas / Work on Media Pitch

Week 4, Feb. 7 – 13: Media Advisories

This week we will explore Week 4 content in Canvas.

Readings: Chapters 4; Check Canvas

Assignments: Media Pitch Due / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 4 folder in Canvas / Work on Media Advisory

Week 5, Feb. 14 – 20: Media Kits

This week we will explore Week 5 content in Canvas.

Readings: Chapter 6; Check Canvas

Assignments: Media Advisory Due / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 5 folder in Canvas / Work on Pre-event (Advance) Release

Week 6, February 21 – 27: Interviewing

This week we will explore Week 6 content in Canvas.
Readings: Chapter 7; Check Canvas
Assignments: Pre-Event (Advance) Release Due / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 6 folder in Canvas / Work on Post-event Release

Week 7, Feb. 28 - March 6: Background Materials and Backgrounders
This week we will explore Week 7 content in Canvas.
Readings: Chapter 8; Check Canvas
Assignments: Post-Event Release Due / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 7 folder in Canvas.

Week 8, March 7 – 13: Spring Break

Week 9, March 14 – 20: Fact Sheets
This week we will explore Week 9 content in Canvas.
Readings: Chapter 9; Check Canvas
Assignments: Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 9 folder in Canvas / Work on Hootsuite Certification (due Tues. April 27 NLT 1:59 p.m.)

Week 10, March 21 – 27: Bio Sketches
This week we will explore Week 10 content in Canvas.
Readings: Chapter 10; Check Canvas
Assignments: Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 10 folder in Canvas / Work on Bio Sketch

Week 11, March 28 - April 3: News Writing
This week we will explore Week 11 content in Canvas.
Readings: Chapter 11; Check Canvas
Assignments: Bio Sketch Due / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 11 folder in Canvas / Work on Spot News Release

Week 12, April 4 – 10: Feature Writing
This week we will explore Week 12 content in Canvas.
Readings: Ch. 12; Check Canvas
Assignments: Spot News Release Due / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 12 folder in Canvas / Work on Feature Story / Polish Portfolio

Week 13, April 11 – 17
This week we will explore Week 13 content in Canvas.
Readings: Ch. 13; Check Canvas
Assignments: Feature Story Due / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 13 folder in Canvas / Work on Social Media Activity.

Week 14, April 18 – 24
This week we will explore Week 14 content in Canvas.
Readings: Check Canvas
Assignments: Work on Social Media Activity / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 14 folder in Canvas.

Week 15, April 25 – April 27 (all deadlines for this week are Tuesday, April 27 last day of classes)
This week we will explore Week 15 content in Canvas.
Readings: Check Canvas
Assignments: Social Media Activity & Portfolio Link Due (Tuesday, April 27 last day of class NLT 11:59 p.m.) / Read, view, listen to content, and complete any work within Week 15 folder in Canvas

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.

Electronic devices
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 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.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

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 and strategic 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 rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. *(Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018)*

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 and accommodations
Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Diversity and inclusivity
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.

COVID-19 protocols for this course

COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy - Masks and Social Distancing
Faculty, staff, students and visitors are expected to monitor current health and safety measure requirements posted to our website and shared through other official communication channels including, but not limited to University email. Definitions related to those requirements and enforcement mechanisms appear in the **COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy (GE2040)**. **Please be reminded that the University currently requires that all persons, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors and in places where appropriate social distancing is not possible.**

Classroom experiences from recent semesters have shown that the campus community generally understands and complies voluntarily with the mask requirement. The policy

does permit faculty members to take action for non-compliance of mask use. Additionally, if students have concerns about faculty or staff mask use, contact Human Resources at **hr@memphis.edu** or 901.678.3573. Faculty who are delivering on-campus instruction may remove their face mask to teach, provided they are located within a delineated teaching area that is no less than 6 feet from students.

Student Health
Students who are experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing or a higher than normal temperature should inform me by email so they can be excused from class and should stay home. Students should contact their health care provider or the Student Health Center at https://www.memphis.edu/health/.

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@memphis.edu or 901.678.2187.

Testing & Notification
The University will continue to provide testing for the entire campus community. The details regarding test availability and locations can be found **here**. Do not come to campus if you are experiencing symptoms, are in isolation or quarantine due to positive test results or exposure, pending test results, or have reason to believe you have come in contact with the virus.

Student Resources
Students who need additional resources can contact the Dean of Students Office at https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php.

Guidelines for classes, labs and equipment in Meeman Journalism Building in Spring 2022
- Anyone feeling sick should stay home.
- Social distance from all others at least 6 feet when possible.
- Wear a mask at all times when in University buildings and outside when social distancing isn't possible.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer regularly.
- No more than one person in the elevator at a time.
- Disinfect your workstation before and after use, including desks, keyboards, mice and screens. Wash your hands after cleaning.
- Air purifiers must run at all times during class meetings.