



Course: JOMC 232.3: Public Relations Writing

Schedule: M/W 10:10–11:25 a.m.

Location: Carroll Hall 268

Dates: Jan. 7–May 5, 2015

Final: Monday, April 27, 8–10 a.m.

Professor: Adam Saffer, Ph.D.

Office Location: 378 Carroll Hall

Office Hours: M/W 9–10 a.m. & 12–2 p.m.

Email: Adam.Saffer@unc.edu (preferred)

Skype: Adam.Saffer (online office hours)

Course Description: Public relations professionals deal with diverse markets, audiences, publics and stakeholders. This course teaches you the basic principles associated with writing in a variety of styles and to multiple publics. Today, public relations professionals are using new communication technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and the like to share messages and interact with publics. In this class, you will learn how to write for emerging mediums as well as how to create traditional documents such as backgrounders, fact sheets, business letters, pitch letters and news releases. You will work with a client to develop a portfolio of public relations materials.

Learning Objectives: As a communication professional, you are expected to know the basic elements of public relations writing. I pose these learning objectives to prepare you for your future career. This class will:

- ...teach you a variety of communication theories used to create written documents.
- ...introduce you to advanced writing activities and build on basic writing skills.
- ...instruct you to create documents and content for print, spoken and online outlets.
- ...reinforce AP style used in documents created by communication professionals.
- ...prepare you to use new technologies strategically for public relations efforts.
- ...raise ethical issues associated with communicating with multiple publics.
- ...expose you to issues of diversity and communicating with varied groups of people.
- ...enable you to understand how rhetoric applies to public relations writing.

Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications Principles are a series of competencies students should demonstrate by the time of graduation. A complete list of these competencies is on page 9. No single course can cover all of these principles. This course will build your abilities in each area:

- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which you work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate your own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which you work.

Prerequisites: To take this course as an undergraduate, you must have successfully completed JOMC 153: News writing and JOMC 137: Principles of Advertising and Public Relations.

Required Textbooks:

Christian, D., Jacobsen, S. & Minthorn, D. (Eds.) (2012). *The Associated Press stylebook and briefing on media law*. New York: Associated Press.

ISBN: 0917360567. Cost: \$23.10 (spiral bound book recommended)

Diggs-Brown, B. (2013). *The PR style guide: Formats for public relations practice* (3rd ed.). Boston: Wadsworth.

ISBN: 1111348111. Cost: \$26.81 (spiral bound book recommended)

Smith, R. D. (2012). *Becoming a Public Relations Writer: A Writing Workbook for Emerging and Established Media*.

New York: Routledge.

ISBN: 9780415888028. Cost: \$42.99 (e-textbook available and recommended)

**Additional readings will be posted to Sakai. You are responsible for downloading these readings.

Attendance/Absences: You will sign-in/check-in each class period. This course has in-class assignments that make up a significant portion of your grade. When you miss class, you miss those points. If you have four unexcused absences, your overall grade will be reduced a letter grade (or 10%). As a professional courtesy, let me know when you will miss class.

Excused absences will be recognized for NCAA or similar events. If you believe your absence should be excused for a relevant event or religious holiday, please send an email detailing the event and why you will miss class.

Absences as a result of family death or health issues will be addressed based on the circumstance. Should you miss a prolonged period of the course, you will be directed to the Registrar's Office for handling the compensation process.

Honor Code: All work submitted for this course must be your work. All sources used for information must be properly cited. Students should adhere to the University's Honor Code: honor.unc.edu. You can find a link to this site on Sakai. You will need to visit this website the first week of class and complete the [student module](#). The ideas and content within your materials must be original and not copied from others. In our industry, we are expected to be original and creative all of the time. All written content submitted for this course will be processed by plagiarism detection software. My policy is to investigate all documents having greater than 15% of content from other sources as measured by TurnItIn.com. Documents that appear to have content from other than the author will be turned over to the University.

Diversity: The University of North Carolina does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Harassment: We all have the right to our opinions. In the classroom, everyone should feel comfortable expressing his or her opinions. We do not need to agree but we do need to respect others' thoughts. The University does not tolerate harassment. Please support your classmates' and others' right to worship, act, look and think, in their own way. Originality is valued in our industry; we should always appreciate everyone's originality. Harassment is a violation of the Honor Code, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964), and Title IX. If you are harassed or feel threatened, please bring it to my attention at an appropriate time or contact the Dean of Students (dos@unc.edu, 919-966-4042).

Special Needs Policy: If you need accommodations based upon a disability, under the terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, please email me your needs by the end of the first week of classes. This includes physical needs as well as less apparent needs such as testing anxiety. If you need information about disabilities, please visit the Learning Center website at <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/ldadhd-services/>

Technology Policy: Please turn off your cell phone and all other communication devices/applications when you are in class. Your phone distracts you and others. In your internships and jobs, you are expected to put your phones away. The same goes for this classroom. The classroom provides sufficient technology hardware. Your use of the technology in the classroom is a privilege and should be used for taking notes and working assignments.

Email and Communication: I check email regularly every day between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. I cannot guarantee an immediate response but will guarantee a response within 24 to 48 hours Monday through Friday. You should treat emails to the client or me as professional correspondence. All communication should include your name, your class, and a professionally worded message.

Coursework/APPLES Client Work: This course uses the services of APPLES Service-Learning Program to provide you with an opportunity to work with a real-world client. This is a valuable experience that provides you with professional pieces to add to your portfolio that you should use on interviews for internships and jobs. Your team will work directly with the client to address their communication needs. As part of your client work, you are expected to check-in with the client regularly and meet with me to discuss your team's progress. More details will be provided throughout the semester. You can use this [APPLES time sheet](#) to track your hours.

Formatting and Writing Expectations: The purpose of this class is to prepare you to be an effective and professional communicator. In this class you are held to professional writing standards on all assignments. Professional writing is the correct use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. You must proofread your documents carefully to ensure your writing is professional. Always print off your documents and proofread on paper. Keep these drafts for my review.

As writers in the digital age, we are privileged to technologies that check our spelling and grammar. There is no excuse for any spelling errors in your documents. Should you forget to spell check and there is a spelling error on your assignment, your highest grade will begin at a C. Whether the document was created in InDesign or Illustrator, or was intended for print or online, it should have the highest quality of writing.

When submitting your assignments, I will tell you on the assignment sheet how I would like you to format the document. There is no one set style or formatting for any public relations document. You will be presented with different formatting and styling requests for documents. Occasionally, the styling and formatting requirements for an assignment will be different from what is suggested in the textbooks. Please follow the instructions that I provide that are based on my industry experience and suggestions for professionals. Follow the formatting requirements in this table for all draft copy assignments where specific formatting and styling is not provided. Documents not meeting these standards will not be accepted and considered late until corrected.

Font	Size	Page Margins	Page Numbers	Name	Submissions	Lines
Times New Roman	12	1 inch all sides	All text pages	Header	Sakai	Double Spaced

Teaching Style: As a student in this class, you should know a few things about my teaching style. First, my objective is to guide you through learning about public relations. For this class, I will coach you to be a better writer. To do this, I have a few expectations for you: (1) be prepared (read or listen to the lecture-capture before class), (2) be engaged (come to class with questions about the readings, topics, or current events), and (3) be interactive (get to know your classmates and me). Second, I believe that technology is a benefit to the instructor and students. I will try to mix technology and traditional teaching methods effectively. Please watch the online videos and other supplemental materials available on Sakai. If you need a different mix to assist your learning, please let me know. Finally, my job is to challenge you to become a communication professional and an expert in public relations. I have developed this course from my professional experiences working on political campaigns, at Ketchum Public Relations and with numerous clients.

Grading: In this class, a majority of your grade is earned based on writing assignments. You are given the opportunity to submit multiple drafts on the writing assignments. The first graded draft is 50% of the total grade for the document. I will edit and point out major mistakes in the first graded draft. You will then have an opportunity to accept or challenge the edits. The final grade is worth the remaining 50% of the total grade and is based on you making the suggested corrections on the first graded draft AND going beyond my suggestions. That is, only accepting my corrections to your first graded draft will not improve your final draft grade; you must show additional improvement to the document.

If you have concerns about a grade, please inform me of this concern via email. I ask that you wait 24 hours after receiving your grade. Please outline your concern(s) and provide evidence to support your claim. You may challenge a grade up to two weeks after it has been posted on Sakai (this does not apply to grades posted during finals). ***Students with a grade below a C minus in this course will need to retake the course.**

Your final grade will be calculated using the University's grading scale: A, B, C, D, F with the plus or minus option for each letter grades A–D. I follow the University's grading standards found here: bit.ly/1rGoz0U. Here are tailored descriptions of the grade levels:

- **A**—Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment that can reasonably be expected of students at a given stage of development. The A grade states clearly that the student has shown such outstanding promise in the aspect of the discipline under study. To achieve this grade, students should not miss class; students should read and critically engage ALL the assigned readings (textbook chapters and articles); complete assignments on time with the correct format, appropriate style, and with few grammatical errors; demonstrate their OUTSTANDING abilities; and stay informed on current events.
- **B**—Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The B grade states that the student has shown solid promise in the aspect of the discipline under study. To achieve this grade, students may miss two classes; read the assigned readings (textbook chapters and articles); complete assignments on time with proficient formatting, styling, and editing; and stay informed on current events.
- **C**—A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The C grade states that while not yet showing any unusual promise, the student may continue to study in the discipline with reasonable hope of intellectual development. To achieve this grade, students may miss two or three classes; read some of the assigned readings (textbook chapters and articles); complete assignments but not on time with formatting, styling, and editing errors; and follow current events occasionally.
- **D**—A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The D grade states that the student has given no evidence of prospective growth in the discipline; an accumulation of D grades should be taken to mean that the student would be well advised to pursue another discipline or try again later. To receive this grade, students miss more than three classes; occasionally read the assigned readings (textbook chapters and articles); does not complete assignments or does so with partially proficient formatting, styling, and editing errors; and does not follow current events.
- **F**—For whatever reasons, an unacceptable performance. The F grade indicates that the student's performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content.

Late Work: Late assignments will receive an automatic 10% per day deduction. If you must miss class on a day when a written assignment is due, you must submit your assignment through Sakai on time. You are responsible for bringing the hard copy of an assignment, assignment sheet and support materials when requested. This policy is necessary so I can quickly return graded assignments. I will not accept any assignment one week after the due date. The one-week mark is calculated one week from the beginning of class period (2:30 p.m.) on the date that the assignment is due.

Assignments and Descriptions

Grades	%	Points
Participation	15%	150
In-class Assignments: Writing Documents	15%	150
Client Assignments: Portfolio Materials	40%	400
Exams I–III (format and content TBA)	30%	300
† Extra credit for research participation. You will be asked to take part in research studies at the School that may require you to come to a lab. Research participation must be completed by April 20, 2015.	5%	50
Total (not including extra credit)	100%	1,000

*On all assignments, please see the assignment sheet/rubric for more details.

Participation (15%)

You will have several opportunities to participate in the course and earn the 150 points available for participation.

- You will receive 100 points if you find examples of public relations documents for 10 lectures (10 points for each example, one per lecture). For example, when the lecture and chapters you read are about fact sheets, you will go online to find examples of good or bad fact sheets, post a link to said fact sheet in the appropriate discussion forum, and discuss the strengths/weaknesses of the documents. You must post and discuss your example 24 hours prior to the lecture in order to receive the points.
- You will receive 25 points if you complete the Hootsuite certification training outside of class by **April 20, 2015**. We will cover the Hootsuite platform in class and you will have access to Hootsuite University where you will receive certification after watching training videos and completing the quizzes.
- You will receive 25 points if you actively participate in class, respond to emails, and engage your other classmates during in-class activities.

Exams (10% each)

There will be three exams. Two will be in-class, multiple-choice exams based on AP terms, class readings, lectures and current events in the public relations industry. The final exam will consist of a multiple-choice AP terms questions and an essay exam. If your goal is to do well on exams, you must review the AP terms, read and take notes on the assigned readings, and take notes during the lectures. I will provide a study guide for each exam.

In-class Assignments: Writing Documents (15%)

Strong public relations writers can draft effective and accurate documents under pressure and in short amounts of time. Throughout the semester there will be days we have an in-class writing assignment. You will be given a prompt and asked to draft a specific type of document. The prompt will be tailored to your client. You will need to develop the content, edit the writing, and print a final version. You may not finish the document but I will grade only what you turn in.

Client Assignments: Portfolio Materials (40%)

Each group's client will have different public relations needs. Everyone will complete the five documents detailed below and select two additional documents based on your client's needs. You should complete a planning sheet for each of the below assignments to improve the quality of the assignment. The final grades for each document will be based on 50% from the first draft and 50% from the final draft. For example, if the total points for an assignment is 50 points, you will be graded 25 points on the first draft and 25 points on the final draft. The final draft should have the suggested corrections from my feedback on the first draft AND additional improvements. Your group's portfolio will be a selection of the highest quality documents from the group members and include a profile of the group members.

***The below assignment descriptions are subject to change.*

Communication Audit (5%)

Communication audits assess an organization's communication efforts. You will learn about the client's background, analyze their media coverage, assess their social media messages, complete a SWOT/situation analysis, and offer recommendations. The communication audit will be based on research and conversations with the client. This document should be approximately five pages and can be completed as a group.

News Releases (5%)

News releases have been the most common document created by public relations professionals. This assignment will require you to write two 5–7-paragraph news releases for the client. The two news releases should be about separate topics and be formatted with appropriate AP style (Roman text, double-spaced lines, appropriate margins, etc.). Along with the assignment, you must suggest appropriate hyperlinks to additional content or photos that you will include. Please include the planning sheet.

Fact Sheet & Backgrounder (5%)

Fact sheets and backgrounders are often used as complementary documents. Fact sheets provide “quick” information. Backgrounders are documents that are more thorough. Draft two 1–page fact sheets (introduction paragraph and 15 bullet points) and a 500-word backgrounder on an individual from the organization. Please include the planning sheet.

Pitch Letter (5%)

For the pitch letter, you will draft a two-page, single-spaced pitch for your client. You must pitch three separate story ideas to the reporter/editor. Your pitch letter will be directed to a local journalist/editor. This assignment requires that you research the media outlets, journalists and editors you would like to pitch. Please include the planning sheet.

Newsletter (5%)

Entry-level professionals often manage newsletters. You need to be familiar with drafting newsletters. There are several types of newsletters. You will select the type most suitable to your client. You should have three different stories in the newsletter. The final draft (single-spaced) should be two-pages that are formatted appropriately. See assignment sheet for more details. Please include the planning sheet.

Additional Documents (5%):

- Media relations guide
- Media list
- Media advisory
- Organizing a media tour
- PSA (2)
- Event flyers
- Event materials
- Five testimonials
- Brochures
- Website updates
- Relationship building strategy
- Speech script (2)
- Letter to the editor
- Informational Video
- Social Media Content

Group Presentation (10%)

Each group will give a 10-minute presentation (with visual aids AND handouts). The presentation should focus on pitching “final products” (although you will have already completed them). The goal of the presentation is for the audience to understand your groups' client, their needs, and the strategic documents you created. Your group presentation will be professional and practiced beforehand. More details will be provided.

DATE	DAY	TOPIC/READING	ASSIGNMENT DUE
1/7	1	Overview Introductions Syllabus Clients	“About Me” Memo (in-class)
1/12	2	What is PR? PR Writing <i>Readings:</i> Introduction & AP Style Primer in Diggs-Brown (2013); Chapters 1–2 in Smith (2012)	Selecting Clients/Groups
1/14	3	Research and Communication Audits <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 4 in Diggs-Brown (2013) and pp. 208–214 in Smith (2012)	Group Contracts Due Receive Communication Audit Assignment
1/19		No Class—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	
1/21	4	The Writing Process <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 4 in Smith (2012)	Review Planning Sheets
1/26	5	Public Relations and Media Relations <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 6 in Diggs-Brown (2013) and Chapters 5 & 7 in Smith (2012)	Receive News Release Assignment Sheet
1/28	6	News Releases <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 11 in Diggs-Brown (2013) and Chapters 8–10 in Smith (2012)	Communication Audit (group) Due
2/2	7	Pitching and Pitch Letters <i>Reading:</i> Chapters 7 & 8 in Diggs-Brown (2013)	News Release Draft I Due Receive Pitch Letter Assignment Sheet
2/4	8	In-class Writing Assignment—News Release	Edit Classmate’s Pitch Letters
2/9	9	Media Catching <i>Reading:</i> See Sakai	Pitch Letter Draft I Due
2/11	10	In-class Writing Assignment—Pitch Letter	
2/16	11	EXAM DAY	EXAM I
2/18	12	Catch Up Day	Catch Up Day
2/23	13	Fact Sheets and Backgrounders <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 6 in Smith (2012)	Receive Fact Sheets/Backgrounder Assignment <i>Attend: Reed Surratt Lecture with BBDO CEO, Andrew Robertson</i>
2/25	14	In-class Activity—Fact Sheets and Backgrounders	

DATE	DAY	TOPIC/READING	ASSIGNMENT DUE
3/2	15	Newsletters <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 10 in Diggs-Brown (2013) and Chapter 13 in Smith (2012)	Receive Newsletter Assignment Sheet Fact Sheets/Background Draft I Due
3/4	16	Group Writing—Newsletter	
3/9-13		Spring Break	Spring Break
3/16	17	Website Writing <i>Reading:</i> Chapters 9 & 16 in Diggs-Brown (2013)	Newsletter Draft I Due
3/18	18	In-class Activity—Design Websites	
3/23	19	New and Social Media <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 14 in Smith (2012) and see Sakai	Optional Documents Draft I Due
3/25	20	In-class Activity—Hootsuite	
3/30	21	Public Relations Writing & Advocacy <i>Reading:</i> Chapters 12 & 13 in Diggs-Brown (2013) and Chapter 12 in Smith (2012)	Edit Classmate's Optional Documents
4/1	22	In-class Writing Assignment—Letter to the Editor	
4/6	23	EXAM II	EXAM II
4/8	24	Speeches <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 14 in Diggs-Brown (2013)	Receive Group Presentation Assignment Sheet
4/13	25	Resumes and Cover Letters	Hootsuite & Extra Credit Due
4/15	26	Activity: Practice Presentations	Practice Group Presentations Due
4/20	28	Final Document Workshop	Bring All Documents Materials to Class
4/22	29	Group presentations to clients	Group presentations to clients
4/27	30	FINAL EXAM DAY	Final Documents Due Exam III Due at 8 a.m.

Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications Competencies Complete List

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- 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 the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- 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;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- 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 basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.