

JOMC 232.001–Public Relations Writing – The Spring 2015 Edition

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Classroom: 141 Carroll
Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Office hours: MW 10:00-11:00 am or by appointment
Office: 47 Carroll

Course Overview: This course is an applied writing skills laboratory and a service-learning class. We will cover major communication tools of the public relations trade for multiple communication platforms, including news releases, features, speeches, pitch letters, fact sheets, public service announcements, blogs, social media and more. *The skills of writing are learned by doing; you will have ample opportunities to learn by writing every day.*

Course Objectives: By the end of the course, students should be able to

- **quickly produce** any of the professional written materials required in the public relations profession;
- **integrate strategy** into communication pieces to target appropriate/diverse audiences and media and to effectively advocate a cause;
- because this course simulates the working conditions of most public relations firms, you will learn to **professionally present** material,
- finally, you will **develop an online portfolio**.

Professional values and competencies: The School of Journalism and Mass Communication's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>. No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. The values and competencies in bold are most relevant for this course:

- 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.**

Prerequisites: To take this course as an undergraduate, you must have successfully completed **JOMC 153: News writing** and **J137: Principles of Advertising and Public Relations**. No exceptions.

Required Text: Barbara Diggs-Brown, *The PR Style Guide: Formats for Public Relations Practice*; and *The Associated Press Stylebook*. I assign supplemental materials as well – see the syllabus and Sakai for details. All assigned readings should be completed before the appropriate class sessions for which they are assigned to generate discussion and ensure you’re prepared to write. I will ask you to critique examples of the various tools of the profession based on these readings. If necessary, I will conduct pop quizzes on text material.

Computer Supplies: All work should be saved to a thumb drive, laptop or your email. Save early and often – I can’t resurrect lost documents!

Reference Materials: Use of reference materials – dictionary, thesaurus, those kind of fun things – to double check accuracy is encouraged (in fact, I’m begging you!). These materials are available in the classroom and in the School’s library.

News Content: Keep up with current events! It’s important to know what’s going on in the world, and what issues your clients (today and in the future) face or will face. Makes you an effective practitioner!

Assignments and Deadlines: All writing assignments must be typed, double-spaced and turned in on time. For outside assignments, late papers (anything after 3:30 pm) will receive a reduced grade unless you and I agree before the assignment is due that it can be late. Otherwise the assignment will receive an F. No assignment will be accepted if it is turned in more than 24 hours after its deadline.

Outside Assignments and APPLES clients: As part of the APPLES Service-Learning Program, you will work with a client organization to produce communication pieces for them. Our clients are Benevolence Farm, Carolina Veterans Organization, and Fill Your Bucket List Foundation. We will have client meetings during some class periods, and you will work toward becoming something of a subject matter expert for your client. You will be expected to do periodic check-ins on the APPLES experiences and meet with the instructor to discuss progress. Failure to do the check-ins will affect your grade. At the end of the class, you will present your materials in an online portfolio.

The APPLES experience is valuable in that it provides professional pieces for your portfolio and gives you experience in client relations work in the professional realm.

Sakai: All PowerPoints and other handouts are/will be posted up on Sakai for your convenience – see the Resources link. Please consult these materials to ensure you produce quality communication tools in this class. This syllabus is also filed under the Syllabus folder, and assignments will be posted in the Assignments folder (how original!). I will populate the Gradebook online as well so you have access to your graded assignments.

Exams: You’ll get to enjoy two exams – a midterm and a final. The midterm exam will be a 75-minute in-class writing exercise. The final (take-home) exam will be a longer writing exercise that covers the full session. Failure to show up for the midterm exam or to make prior arrangements to take it later will result in a grade of F. Failure to complete the final will result in an AB.

Course Grade Calculation: I will calculate your final grade as follows:

In-class assignment	20%
2 critique assignments	10%
Client assignments	20%
Midterm exam	15%
Final exam	15%
Group presentation	15%
Participation (class/client)	5%

Grading scale: A = 90-100
 B = 80-89
 C = 70-79 (+/-, too)
 D = 60-69
 F = below 60

I follow the University's Grading Standards:

"A" students do not miss classes during the semester. They read and critically engage all the assigned textbook chapters and any optional readings on reserve before the material is covered in class. Written assignments and exams are not only complete but cover more than just the minimum requirements. The assignments exhibit proper style and format, are well organized, integrate strategic planning and targeting, and are written precisely and concisely. All materials are turned in on time or early, and all rewrite opportunities are used. These students keep up with current events.

"B" students miss one or two classes during the semester, but these are excused absences. They usually read the assigned textbook chapters and some of the optional readings on reserve in the library before the material is covered in class. Written assignments and exams usually exhibit proper style and formatting, integrate strategic planning and targeting, are well organized, and are written precisely and concisely. All materials are turned in on time, and all rewrite opportunities are used. These students tend to keep up with current events.

"C" students miss one or two classes during the semester, usually excused. They read the assigned textbook chapters and some of the optional readings on reserve in the library just before the material is covered on the exam. Written assignments and exams usually exhibit proper style and formatting, but they do not always integrate strategic planning and targeting and are not always well organized or written precisely and concisely. All materials are turned in on time, and most rewrite opportunities are used. These students sometimes keep up with current events.

"D" students miss three or more classes during the semester and skim assigned readings. Written assignments and exams usually exhibit proper style and formatting, but they often lack integrated strategic planning and targeting and are often not well organized or written precisely and concisely. Materials are not always turned in on time; only some rewrite opportunities are used. They don't keep up with current events.

"F" students fail to come to class on a regular basis. They miss exams and written assignments and fail to use rewrite opportunities.

Please note: Students who earn less than a C-minus in the course will have to retake the class.

Attendance: Regular, on-time class attendance your obligation, and you are responsible for all work, including tests and written work, for all class meetings. No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any given number of class meetings. **Note:** In practical terms, almost one-third of your grade is based on in-class assignments, making regular class attendance vital. An unexcused absence will result in a 0 for that day's assignment.

Absences: You may make up work you missed **if an absence is pre-approved**. It will be easier to obtain permission than forgiveness.

Honor Code: I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of

the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Seeking Help: If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

Diversity: The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and 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's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Harassment: UNC does not tolerate harassment based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, disability, or for any other reason. It is also a violation of the Honor Code and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Title IX of the Educational Amendments. If you need assistance with a harassment issue or problem, bring it to my attention or The Office of the Dean of Students, dos@unc.edu or 919.966.4042.

Special Accommodations: If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

ACCREDITATION

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on the last six bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.

Pep Talk: This class will at intervals be time consuming and difficult. Your first few assignments possibly will receive low grades, which can be discouraging. Realize that if you put forth the effort, your work should improve throughout the semester, and this improvement will be reflected in your grades.

Please, come talk to me at any time if you have questions or concerns about the course. My objective for the course is to make it a positive learning experience, admittedly through your hard work. I am a resource available for your help, not an obstacle in your path.

Guidelines for Grading of Assignments

See the next sheet, which is a modified version of the JOMC 153, “News writing,” criteria, for how in-class and outside assignments will be graded. The following guidelines also apply.

In-class assignments:

- Ample time will be given in class to work on in-class assignments. You may not always complete the piece, however. Don't worry. If you have a good first three paragraphs, you have what is necessary to write the piece. Speed comes with practice. I only grade what you turn in.
- Give yourself time to proofread. It's better to have quality work that's not yet complete than a completed assignment riddled with errors! I will alert you when there are about 10 minutes remaining in class. Save, save, save!

Out-of-class assignments (mostly for client):

- Assignments are due at the **beginning** of class time. Late assignments (and, yes, that includes one minute late!) are docked 30 points. Assignments turned in more than 24 hours late automatically will be assigned a grade of 0.
- Assignments must be typewritten; assignments not typewritten will be docked 30 points. In the “real world,” computer glitches and printing problems happen but are not excused – the same is true in this classroom. Leave yourself plenty of time to cope with these problems and still make your deadline.
- Out-of-class assignments should be **picture perfect** when they are turned in. They may not be edited on hard copy. Obvious corrections, such as penna-in material, correction fluid, typeovers, etc., will be penalized 10 points each.

Rewrites:

- You may rewrite any assignment (in class or out of class) that receives a grade of 60 or lower. The rewrite is due no later than two days after you receive the assignment back, no later than the beginning of that class period. It is your responsibility to meet this deadline. The rewrite grade and the original grade will be averaged to determine your final grade for that assignment.
- You must **FIRMLY** attach the original work with your rewrite. If no original is attached, the rewrite will not be graded.
- Rewrites also will be subject to greater scrutiny. Mistakes I missed the first time around I may catch on the second read. Proofread your rewrites carefully!

Grading Criteria for All Assignments (Look familiar??)

There are two components to each of your grades: Strategy addresses appropriateness and accuracy of the content and approach; and technique addresses spelling, grammar, punctuation, AP style and other formatting issues. I average the two scores for each assignment.

I. Writing

- +5 for an exceptionally effective lead and supporting material
- +5 to +10 for exceptionally effective organization and treatment of material
- +2 for effective transition or introduction of material
- +2 to +10 for excellence in quality of information gathered and used
- +2 to +10 for excellence in determining targeting strategy
- 2 to -5 for ineffective or missing treatment of material, including, but not limited to, wordiness; use of jargon or clichés; inclusion of unnecessary or obvious information; redundancy; inappropriate choice or use of quoted material; incorrect word choice, including sexist language
- 5 to -10 for an ineffective lead that needs work or for lack of supporting material for lead
- 15 to -20 for missing the lead entirely or burying it
- 10 for failure to include contact information on pieces
- 10 for failure to include phone number, address, etc., of your organization or your client's organization

II. Mechanics

- 5 for each error or inconsistency in style
- 2 for excessively long or complicated sentences or paragraphs
- 5 for each spelling error (yes, typos are spelling errors)
- 5 for each punctuation error
- 5 for each grammatical error
- 10 for each minor factual error
- 50 for misspelling a proper name**; -10 for each subsequent misspelling of a proper name

III. Research/Gathering Information

- +/-5 to 10 for resource selection: quality and number of sources used; appropriateness of individual sources, including the level of expertise or authority involved
- +/-5 to 20 for thoroughness of material: existence of loose ends, holes, or unanswered questions; development of significant angles; inclusion of needed detail
- +/-5 to 15 for backgrounding; research necessary to make the work complete or to provide needed explanations
- +/-20 for handling of legal matters, such as libel, violation of legal right of privacy, and copyright violations
- +/-15 for addressing material to appropriate publics
- +/-15 for making the message or statement clear (i.e., a news peg; inclusion of key message)

Note: Many of these plus and minus points may be applied to the same story for recurring errors or for continual superior performance.

Service Learning and Client Portfolio

This semester's service-learning experience will involve working with one of three clients – [Carolina Villages](#), [Fill Your Bucket List Foundation](#), and [The Arc of the Triangle](#). There are a number of relevant materials you might develop for our clients – **particularly** if you take the initiative and use your growing knowledge of strategic communication to help your organization.

You may work individually or with other classmates on any aspects of client activities. It's your call, but it is imperative that you begin now to determine how you want to contribute.

Remember: Through service learning, you will develop client contact skills, which are essential for professional development. Be sure to write up this experience on your resume and include any communication items you produced/helped create in your online portfolio. Much class time will be spent discussing these assignments, and more handouts will follow.

Step one – **Building an Online Portfolio.**

If you haven't created a website/online portfolio, this is the semester to do it! There are a number of free web creation sites – Wordpress, Wix, Weebly, among others. Resources on Sakai may help you as you develop this portal.

Step two – At the end of the semester, **Your Online Portfolio** should include:

1. An updated **resume** (including your service-learning work for this semester)
2. A 1-2 page **reflection essay** – How did this experience contribute to your education and preparation for the real world? What was the most-valuable part of your service-learning experience? Most challenging? Least valuable? What recommendations would you make to the client regarding its PR efforts?
3. **Final time sheet** – You may create your own to track volunteer hours, or use the APPLES form: <http://ccps.unc.edu/files/2012/10/SLC-Course-Timelog-Form.pdf>
4. A **Communication Audit** (See Assignment link on Sakai for details) should provide an up-to-date overview of the organization's communications, including background, SWOT/situational analysis, and recommendations. Your report should be developed through discussions with the client and instructor, and through an assessment of its current communication materials/vehicles. The report will run about 5 pages. You may work independently or with a classmate.
5. **4 communication tools** that your client needs. Below is a list of SOME of the items you might consider. The important thing is to work with your client to identify what they need that matches with the types of tools you're learning about in class. This is not a complete list – other ideas are certainly welcome!

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|--|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| - Profiles – volunteers, staff, participants | - Fact sheet or E-FAQ | - Website updates |
| - 4 testimonials | - Direct mail letter | - 2 Flyers on event/activity |
| - 1-2 minute informational video | - Media list/event contact list | - Tweet series (at least 6) |
| - News release | - Media advisory | - Persuasion platform |
| - Broadcast release | - Presi with script | - 2 blog posts |
| - Letter to the editor | - Brochure | - 2 PSAs |
| - Fact sheet or FAQ | - Media relations guide | - Event plan &/or materials |
| - Linked In page/materials | - Facebook posts (4) | |

Other ideas welcome!!

Class Schedule

(Note: This is a guide for the semester, subject to change. You will be notified of any modifications.)

Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments for the day
8/19	Introduction to the course and review the course syllabus	Course syllabus (Sakai)
8/24	Clients and the deep dive	No readings, no assignments
8/26	Research	No readings, no assignments
8/31	Communication Audits	Ch. 4, Hallmark's Communication Audit OCPYC audit (Sakai)
9/2	Fact sheets/FAQs	Fact sheet-backgr/ How to write a great FAQ page / How to write a great FAQ page (Sakai). [Critique assignment]: Find and assess a fact sheet or FAQ. Turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of class (12 fonts, double-spaced, 2 pages long).
9/7	Labor day, No Class	
9/9	News basics, advisories	CH16. pp 207-208 [Critique assignment]: Find and assess an advisory. Turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of class (12 fonts, double-spaced, 2 pages long).
9/14	News releases	Ch 11.
9/16	News releases, part 2	[Critique assignment]: Find and assess news release. Turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of class (12 fonts, double-spaced, 2 pages long).
9/21	Apologia, video release	Domino case, video release examples (Sakai)
9/23	Social media, blogs, tweets, etc	Ch 9.
9/28	Social media, part 2	Sea world case (Sakai) [Critique assignment]: Find good or bad example of organizations' or celebrities' social media use (Facebook updates, tweets, blogs, or Instagram) Turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of class (12 fonts, double-spaced, 2 pages long).
9/30	Deep-dive presentations	SWOT and PR challenges
10/5	Broadcast and streaming media	Ch 2.
10/7	Broadcast and streaming media, part 2	[Critique assignment]: Go to prnewswire.com or businesswire.com and select a video (or multimedia) news release Turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of class (12 fonts, double-spaced, 2 pages long).
10/12	University Day, No Class (Class cancelled during ceremony 10: AM until 1:00 PM)	
10/14	Midterm (Open book, open note)	
10/19	Annual Report	Ch1. Annual Report example (Sakai) [Critique assignment]: Find and assess an annual report. Turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of class (12 fonts, double-spaced, 2-3 pages long).
10/21	Group project Kick-off	
10/26	PSAs	Ch. 13 [Critique assignment]: Find and assess an PSA. Turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of class (12 fonts,

		double-spaced, 2-3 pages long).
10/28	Letters to the editor	Ch. 12; letter to the editor examples (Sakai) [Critique assignment]: Find a letter to the editor associated with your client's issue. Everyone, bring a copy.
11/2	Speeches	Ch. 14
11/4	Speeches, part 2	[Critique assignment]: Find a speech example. Turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of class (12 fonts, double-spaced, 2-3 pages long).
11/9	Fundraising letter	Fundraising letter examples (Sakai)
11/11	Fundraising letter	Fundraising letter examples (Sakai)
11/16	Request for proposal (RFP)	RFP writing guide (Sakai)
11/18	Group project meeting with prof Kim	
11/23	Portfolio day	No formal class session-work on your portfolios
11/25	Final exam (Take home)	
11/30	Group presentation I	
12/2	Group presentation II	