

JOMC 232.002–Public Relations Writing – Fall 2015 Edition

Instructor: Bonnie Newman Davis

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Classroom: Carroll Hall, TBA

Time: Tuesdays - Thursdays, 2-3:15 p.m

Office hours: T-TH , 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.; 4-5 p.m.;

Wednesdays: By Appointment

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, etc. – to double check accuracy is encouraged. 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. This will make 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 focused in the health arena – **Abundance NC, NC Botanical Garden, and Piedmont Wildlife Center, UNC Visitors’ Center FIRST LOOK** program. 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/homework assignments | 30% | Grading scale: | A = 90-100 |
| Client assignments | 30% | | B = 80-89 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----|--------------|------------|
| Midterm exam | 15% | C = 70-79 | (+/-, too) |
| Final exam | 15% | D = 60-69 | |
| Participation (class/client) | 10% | 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: You are expected to conduct yourself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://studentconduct.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.

Diversity: The University's policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination are outlined at <http://policy.sites.unc.edu/files/2013/04/nondiscrim.pdf>. In summary, UNC 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 or disabilities.

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 me know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Learning Center website at <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/ldadhd-services/> or call 919-962-3782.

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. **'Tis 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

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 four clients **Abundance NC, NC Botanical Garden, and Piedmont Wildlife Center, UNC Visitors' Center FIRST LOOK**. 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!

- Profiles – volunteers, staff, participants
- 4 testimonials
- 1-2 minute informational video
- News release
- Broadcast release
- Letter to the editor
- Fact sheet or FAQ

- Fact sheet or E-FAQ
- Direct mail letter
- Media list/event contact list
- Media advisory
- Presi with script
- Brochure
- Media relations guide
- Facebook posts (4)

- Website updates
- 2 Flyers on event/activity
- Tweet series (at least 6)
- Persuasion platform
- 2 blog posts
- 2 PSAs
- Event plan &/or materials

Other ideas welcome!!

- Linked In page/materials

Bonnie Newman Davis

JOMC 232 Class Schedule- Fall 2015

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

Dates, Readings and Assignments

Aug. 18

Welcome! Course syllabus (Sakai – Syllabus link);

Aug. 20

Writing Exercise for Apples Service Learning Clients (Write a cover letter to two ASL clients, indicating your interest in working with that organization)

Aug. 25

Review Chapters 11 & 13

Review Cover Letters for ASL clients

News releases , Ch. 11; news release format; news release examples; *10 common mistakes in writing press releases* (Sakai)

Assess the Dress for Success release based on what readings advise (Sakai)

Aug. 27

AP Style-A Primer (textbook)

Assignment: Write a News Release that announces an event for one of the APPLES Service Learning Clients

Assignment: Review AP Style Sheet (Sakai)

Sept. 1

Edit News Releases/Apples Services Learning Clients

In class: Complete AP Style Exercise

Sept. 3

Fact sheets/FAQs, *Facts R Us*; At first glance: *How to write a great FAQ page* (Sakai).

Assignment: Complete AP Style Exercise; Due Sept. 8

Sept. 8

Guest Speaker – Leslie Parkins, APPLES Service Learning

News basics, advisories, pp.207-208; *Writing and distributing a media advisory*; Media advisory format; Advisory examples (Sakai)

Assignment: Write a short profile about Leslie Parkins, due Sept. 15

Sept. 10

Boilerplates and media lists; Ch. 7; Boilerplates, p. 205; safe harbor statements, Boilerplate examples; *How to manage edits from the legal and executive teams*

Sept. 15

Research: *Introducing Share Tally; Using outcomes to measure nonprofit success; Data drives social performance; ROI of online press releases; AP Style: Punctuation and Grammar* (Sakai);
Assignment: Punctuation and Grammar Exercise

Sept. 17

Incorporating visuals; Ch. 6; *3 creative ways brands are using Pinterest; Cutlines: How to become a 'scanner grabber';* Photo caption format; photo release form (**Sakai**)

Assignment: Based on readings, find a captioned photo and ID its effectiveness

Sept. 22

Media relations; Ch. 8; *Eight ground rules when working with reporters; Media catching and the journalist-public relations practitioner relationship* (Sakai)

Assignment: Browse the Help a Reporter Out site

Sept. 24

Social media, Blogs, tweets, etc.; Ch. 9; *Top 5 blogging mistakes; Top 10 best practices for blogging;*

Assignment: Find a PR- or client-related blog that you'd like to critique

Sept. 29

Social media, Part two; *Return of the Twinkie, How MomsRising and charity: water Use Storify and Quora to Advance Their Missions*

Oct. 1

Portfolios, writing job cover letters; *15 top tips for a successful PR career; Top 10 resume trends; 4 reasons why you need an online portfolio;* Job letter request; *An intern's point of view;* UNC Career Services Web page- letters (**Sakai**)

Oct. 6 Broadcast and streaming media; Ch. 2; *Writing for the Ear; Broadcasting style tips* (**Sakai**)

Oct. 8

Midterm exam

Open book, open notes

Oct. 13

More broadcast; Ch. 15; *Vine: Marketing and PR with 6-Second Videos*; B-roll stock footage examples (Sakai)

Assignment: Go to prnewswire.com or businesswire.com and select a video (or multimedia) news release to share/critique

Oct. 15

Fall Break

Oct. 20

PSAs; Ch. 13; *Team Gleason: NFL and stand together PSA*; *Live Read, radio scripts*; (Sakai).

Assignment: Find a PSA example to present in class/critique. Browse through Sound Cloud

**** Check-in: Looking at your Online Portfolio progress****

Oct. 22

Letters to the editor; Ch. 12; letter to the editor examples (Sakai)

Assignment: Find a letter to the editor associated with your client's issue (or about a nonprofit issue) - Critique

Oct. 27

Direct mail letters; Ch. 5; BP Letter; Direct mail – poor letter; Email etiquette in a Snapchat era (Sakai)

Oct. 29

Direct mail letters, part 2; 6 Tips to Ensure your Emails are Read (and Enjoyed); Direct e-mail appeals; CWS e-letter; SECU Family House letter (Sakai)

Assignment: Critique the CWS or SECU letter (or another if you have one)

Nov. 3

Features; Feature facts, *College football star's novel story*; *Receiving the gift of life*; *Lack of computer access a major hurdle for the poor*; *Startling slip-ups in safety*; (Sakai)

Assignment: Critique a feature story (on Sakai or one you find)

Nov. 5

Feature pitch or catch; PR Pros: 6 questions to answer before you hit 'send'; Pitch letter tips; example-Lousy pitch; pitch idea that worked; (Sakai)

Assignment: Identify a media outlet and reporter or editor to pitch a client feature to

Nov. 10

Persuasion platform; *Program Writing*; Highway Safety Research Center; Platform; Designing an omni-channel strategy (Sakai);

Nov. 12

Speeches; Ch. 14; *Giving to Piedmont Gives Hope*; Also – please listen to speech by Dr. Dan Ariely

(page down a bit for video)

*****Persuasion Platform due at the beginning of class*****

Nov. 17

More speaking; *Worst. Speech. Ever-Essential don'ts for speechwriters* (Sakai)

Nov. 19

Portfolio day – no formal class session – work on your portfolios. 😊

Nov. 24

Portfolio day – no formal class session – work on your portfolios. 😊

You may provide me with a link to your online portfolio

Nov. 26

Thanksgiving Holiday

Dec. 1

Last Day of Class

Dec. 5

Final Exam, More Details TBA