JOMC 232.001—Public Relations Writing — Summer I 2015

Instructor: Stephanie Mahin
Office: 392 Carroll Hall
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Classroom: Carroll Hall
Time: Monday through Friday, 9:45-11:15 a.m.

Office hours: M, T, W noon-1:30 p.m.
and 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 a portfolio.

Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications has developed a series of competencies students should demonstrate by the time of graduation: [http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps](http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps).

No single course could possibly give you a solid grasp of all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. Our advanced courses will provide you with more detailed guidance based on your specific area of specialization. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on:

- 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 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 may 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. If necessary, I will conduct pop quizzes on text material.
Recommended Texts: Webster’s New World Dictionary. Other materials may be handed out or posted on Sakai.

Computer Supplies: All work should be saved to a thumb drive, laptop and/or your email and not to the hard drive (it gets dumped regularly). Murphy’s law is alive and well in computer labs, and snafus do occur. Save early and often – I can’t resurrect lost documents!

Reference Materials: Use of reference materials 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 by reading The Daily Tar Heel, Raleigh News & Observer and by following other news sources, such as National Public Radio (91.5 FM). 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. I will not accept late assignments. There is a lot of information to cover in a short amount of time so please budget your time accordingly.

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. 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 a portfolio.

The APPLES experience is valuable in that it provides professional pieces for your portfolio and gives you experience in working in the professional realm. This is summer but do not forget your professionalism!

Sakai: All PowerPoint and other handouts are/will be posted 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.

Exams: Two exams, a midterm and a final, will be given. The midterm exam will be an AP style exam. The final exam will be a writing exercise that covers the full session. Failure to show up for and complete the midterm exam will result in a grade of F. Failure to show up for and complete the final exam will result in an AB.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-class assignments</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critique Friday</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation (class/client)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</table>

Grading scale:
- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- 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.

Honor Code: It is expected that each student in this class 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 haven’t read the code in a while, please revisit it! http://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/Fall2012print.pdf.

Nondiscrimination Policy: The University’s policy on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination is available at http://policy.sites.unc.edu/files/2013/04/nondiscr.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 Department of Disability Services website at http://disabilityservices.unc.edu or call 919.962.8300. If you need assistance or services from the Academic Success Program for Students with LD/ADHD please contact them at 919-962-7227 or http://www.unc.edu/asp/.

Attendance: Regular, on-time class attendance is 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. An unexcused absence will result in a 0 for that day’s assignment with no chance to make it up.

Absences: You may make up work you missed if an absence is pre-approved. More than two absences will negatively impact your grade

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. I want you to be successful. My goal is to make this a positive learning experience for you. I am a resource for you, 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 (News Release & Pitch Letter):

- 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.

- Don’t wait until the last moment to print your copy. Give yourself time to proofread. It’s always better to have quality work that’s not complete than a completed assignment riddled with errors. I will let you know when there are about 10 minutes remaining in class. Save, save, save, and then save again.

- For in-class assignments only, edit on your hard copy. Use the standard proofreading marks given in *The Associated Press Stylebook*. I must be able to read your changes!

Out-of-class (group) assignments (mostly for client-Communication Audit, Persuasive letter, Backgrounder/Fact Sheets):

- Assignments are due at the beginning of class time. No late assignments will be accepted. Failure to turn in a client assignment reflects poorly on you and the class, who are your team members.

- Assignments must be typewritten; assignments not typewritten will be docked 30 points to start. In the “real world,” computer glitches and printing problems happen but are not excused – the same is true in this classroom. Deadlines are equally as important. Leave yourself plenty of time to cope with these problems and still make your deadline.

- Out-of-class assignments should be your best work when they are turned in. They may not be edited on hard copy. Obvious corrections, such as penned-in material, correction fluid, type overs, etc., will be penalized 10 points each to start.

Rewrites:

- You will rewrite each assignment that will become a part of your portfolio. It is your responsibility to meet the portfolio 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. Include a paragraph of what was changed and why.

- 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!

- 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.
Critique Fridays:

• Choose an organization to follow (their Website, in the news, in social media) for the semester.
• Each Friday, you will give the team an update on the organization. What’s going on with them in the news? What’s the latest press release posted? When was the last press release posted? What is their social media engagement like? What opportunities are being missed? What are they doing well? This is a time to critically examine the organization using a PR lens and much of what we discuss in class.
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 background work; 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 summer session’s service-learning experience will involve working with the Park Library. There are a number of relevant activities for this session – particularly if you take the initiative and use your growing knowledge of strategic communication to help advance the visibility of Library.

You will work as a team to complete the required tasks; this may require meeting as a group outside of class time. It’s imperative that you begin now to exchange contact information with your classmates. Your team members will grade your contribution to the team at the end of the semester. This will factor in to your over class participation grade. The session is only 5 weeks; time flies!

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 portfolio. Class time will be spent discussing these assignments.

The Portfolio you turn in at the end of the semester should include:

1. An updated resume (including your service-learning work for this summer session)
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 school regarding its PR efforts?
3. A Communication Audit should provide an up-to-date overview of the Park Library’s communications (and the j-school’s communication about the Library), including background, SWOT/situational analysis, and recommendations. Your report should be developed through discussions with Library Director Stephanie Brown, students and faculty, and through an assessment of its current communication materials/vehicles. The report will run about 5 pages.
4. Backgrounder/Fact Sheets
5. Persuasive letter to a key public of the Park Library (you may subdivide in whatever way you see as most useful – faculty in general, faculty teaching introductory classes, faculty by sequence, faculty by course, faculty by particular research interests; students in general, transfer students, students by a particular sequence, etc. Your letter should be in a format that can be sent electronically – in addition to saving money, it also provides you an opportunity to use visuals, multimedia, hyperlinks, colors, etc.
6. News item for JOMC News (the j-school’s weekly e-newsletter). There are many topics to consider – summer schedule, fall schedule, new books or resources that are available, offer to assist faculty with classes and research, etc. You pick! It should be in the proper news release format.
7. Optional piece – you must also do at least one optional piece for your portfolio. There are a lot of potential options for you to choose from, and several ideas follow. If you come up with another idea, let’s discuss it first. This is not a complete list.

- Collection of at least 4 testimonials
- Set of at least 2 video testimonials
- 90-second video
- News release for JOMC News
- Feature pitch for Communicator, The Lead, etc.
- Broadcast release on a newsworthy topic
- Letter to the editor
- Flyer on an upcoming event or activity
- Flyer or poster to encourage library use
- Fact/info sheet for a targeted public
- Bookmarks or other simple giveaway that promote the library
- Targeted tweet series (at least 6)
- Persuasion platform

Other ideas welcome!!
**Class Schedule**

(Note: This is a guide for the semester that is subject to change. You will be notified of any modifications but consult Sakai frequently.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Completed Readings, Assignments, Agenda for the Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>Welcome! Introductory writing</td>
<td>Course syllabus</td>
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<td>Critique Fridays</td>
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<td>Diggs-Brown, pp. 112-120; AP Style: A Primer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brainstorm non-profit organization for semester work</td>
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<td>May 14</td>
<td>Research and Communication Audits</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>Diggs-Brown, Ch. 4-Communication Audits</td>
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<td><strong>Communication Audit Assignment</strong></td>
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<td>May 15</td>
<td>Client visit – Stephanie W. Brown Park Library Director</td>
<td>Diggs-Brown, pp. 62-64, 71-72, 80-81, 236</td>
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<td>Discuss your company website for Critique Friday (why did you choose it? What PR elements does it contain that will allow you to do a good critique each Friday?)</td>
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<td><strong>Message Platform Assignment</strong></td>
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<td>May 18</td>
<td>Backgrounders/Fact Sheets/FAQs</td>
<td><strong>Readings in Sakai</strong></td>
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<td><em>How to write a great FAQ page</em> (access online at <a href="http://www.freelancecopywritersblog.com/2130/who-to-write-a-great-faq-page/">http://www.freelancecopywritersblog.com/2130/who-to-write-a-great-faq-page/</a>*)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>News Releases</td>
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<td>Ch. 11</td>
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<td><strong>Readings in Sakai</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>Backgrounders/News Release Assignments</strong></td>
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<td><em><strong>Group’s Message Platform due by 9:45 a.m. (Sakai)</strong></em></td>
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<td>May 19</td>
<td>Boiler plates and media lists</td>
<td>Ch. 7; Boilerplates, p. 205</td>
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<td><strong>In-Class Writing Exercise</strong></td>
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<td>May 20</td>
<td>Pitch Letters/Media Lists &amp; Tours</td>
<td>Diggs-Brown, 211-212 &amp; Chapter 8</td>
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<td>May 21</td>
<td>Pitch Letters</td>
<td><strong>In-Class Writing Exercise</strong></td>
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<td><em><strong>First Draft Communication Audit due by 9:45 a.m. (Sakai)</strong></em></td>
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<td>May 22</td>
<td>Media Relations/Media Catching</td>
<td>Ch. 8</td>
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<td><strong>Readings in Sakai</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Critique Friday!</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
***Report in on client activities due (e-mail is fine) – what are you working on? What will you work on? By 9:45 a.m.***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May 25</th>
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May 26  
Letters to the editor  
Ch. 12; letter to the editor

*** News Release Group Draft due by 9:45 a.m. (Sakai)***

*** Backgrounder/Fact Sheets Group Draft due by 9:45 a.m. (Sakai)***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May 27</th>
<th>Midterm Review</th>
<th>AP Terms</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May 28</th>
<th>Midterm exam</th>
<th>AP Terms</th>
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</table>

*** Pitch Letter Group Draft due by 9:45 a.m. (Sakai)***

| May 29   | PR in the real world | Skype Conversation with Kathleen Boylan, VP, Public Communications, Inc. 
Critique Friday! |
|----------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------|

***Report in on client activities due (e-mail is fine) – what are you working on? What will you work on? By 9:45 a.m.***

| June 1   | Portfolios, writing job cover letters | Readings in Sakai 
Cover letters; Items for Portfolios; Worst cover letter Ever; 15 top tips for a successful PR career (Sakai); UNCT Career Services Web page- letters, found online at http://careers.unc.edu/students/resumes-and-letters/cover-letters.html |
|----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|

| June 2   | Broadcast/VNRs | Ch. 2; Writing for the Ear (Sakai); Broadcasting style tips at http://www.jprof.com/2013/05/15/broadcasting-style-tips-by-laurie-lattimore/ 
|----------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------|

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>June 3</th>
<th>PSAs</th>
<th>Ch. 13; PSA examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 4</td>
<td>Group Work</td>
<td>Work on Comm Audit</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 5</td>
<td>PR in the real world</td>
<td>Skype Conversation-Heidi Deja, Large Mouth Communication Critique Friday!</td>
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<td><em><strong>Report in on client activities due (e-mail is fine) – what are you working on? What will you work on? By 9:45 a.m.</strong></em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 8</td>
<td>Direct mail letters</td>
<td>Ch. 5; BP Letter; direct mail letter-targeting PRSSA (Sakai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 9</td>
<td>Features</td>
<td>Feature facts, Receiving the gift of life; Lack of computer access a major hurdle for the poor (Sakai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 10</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>Ch. 9; Top 5 blogging mistakes (Sakai); and Best practices for blogging (Sakai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 11</td>
<td>Presentation Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>***Final Group Portfolio Due by 9:45a (upload to Sakai Dropbox) *****Individual Portfolios Due by 9:45a (upload to Sakai Dropbox)</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 12</td>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>Class begins @ 10a.m.</td>
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<td>Client presentation @ 10:30 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>Last Day of Class</td>
<td>Final Exam Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 17</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>TBD</td>
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