



Course: JOMC 232.1: Public Relations Writing

Schedule: M/W 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

Location: Carroll 141

Dates: Aug. 20–Dec. 3

Final: December 5, 12 p.m.

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Office Location: 378 Carroll Hall

Office Hours: 3

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Skype: Adam.Saffer (online office hours)

Course Description: Public relations professionals deal with diverse markets, audiences, publics, and stakeholders. Public Relations Writing teaches you the basic principles associated with writing in an assortment 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 individuals. In this class, you will learn how to write for these 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 an assortment of communication theories used to creating 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 of these areas:

- 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.

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)

Suggested Textbook:

Smith, R.D. (2012). *Becoming a public relations writer: A writing workbook for emerging and established media* (4th ed.). New York: Routledge.

ISBN: 0415888026. Cost: \$63.21 (Kindle version available for \$59.95)

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

Coursework/APPLES Client Work: This course is using 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.

Grading: 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 chapter 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 one or two classes; read the assigned readings (textbook chapter and articles); complete assignments on time with proficient formatting, styling, and editing; and stay informed on 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 chapter 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 chapter 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.

****Students with a grade below an C minus in this course will need to retake the course.**

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. Writing is a process and becoming a professional writer takes time.

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 can check our spelling. 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 from print or online, it should have the highest quality of writing.

When printing your assignments, I expect that you submit a draft copy. Draft copy is formatted with double spaced lines for editing. Final copy is printed in color with images placed within the text. Final copy format is required for specific documents.

Follow these formatting requirements for all draft copy assignments. Documents not meeting these simple 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

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 absence, your overall grade will be reduced 30% and the highest possible grade you can then receive is a 70%. As a professional courtesy, let me know if you are going to miss class (excused or unexcused).

Excused absences will be recognized for NCAA or similar events for student athletes. If you believe your absence should be excused for a relevant event or religious holiday, please send an email detailing what the event is and why you should miss class. This is a chance to practice writing persuasive messages.

Absences as a result of family death or health issues will be addressed based on the case. 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 discussions, tasks, or lectures. In your internships and jobs, you are expected to not be on your phone during meetings. 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. If you need to use a laptop in class, please let me know why.

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. You should treat emails to the client or me as professional correspondence. Correspondence deemed unprofessional will not receive a response. All communication should include your name, your class, and a professionally worded message.

Grade Questions: 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.

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 you have 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 working with Dr. Stephanie Blake and Dr. Michael Kent, and from my experience working at Ketchum Public Relations.



Assignments and Descriptions

Assignments	%	Points
In-class Assignments: Writing Documents	20%	200
Client Assignments: Portfolio Materials	40%	400
Group Presentation	10%	100
Exams I–III (format and content TBA)	30%	300
† Extra Credit:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research participation: You will be asked to take part in research at the School that may require you to come to a lab. I will provide more details about this option. 	5%	50
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course or Current Event Questions: You submit the day before class questions from the readings in memo form. See page 208 of the textbook for how to write a memo. You must have 10 well-developed questions. You may also submit a similar memo asking questions about a current event. Please provide background on the event and how it relates to public relations. 	2.5%	25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hootsuite Certification: I have secured access for each student in this class to become certified on Hootsuite for FREE. We will cover this tool in class during the semester. If you complete the certification training outside of class by the end of the semester, you will receive extra credit. This certification would look excellent on your resume. 	2.5%	25
Total	100–110%	1,000–1,100

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

Exams (10% each)

There will be three exams this semester. Two exams will be in-class, multiple-choice exams based on AP terms, class readings, lectures and current events in the public relations industry. The third and final exam will consist of a multiple-choice AP terms questions and a essay exam that will be a take-home. If your goal is to do well in the class and on these exams, you must have to 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 and arrange a study session the night before the exams.

Group Presentation (10%)

Each group will give a 15-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 before hand. More details will be provided.

In-class Assignments: Writing Documents (20%)

Strong public relations writers can draft effective and accurate documents under pressure and in short amounts of time. Throughout the semester there will 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. More details will be provided.

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 must complete a planning sheet for each of the below assignments. The final grades for each document will be based on 50% from the second draft and 50% from the final draft. You will give the final drafts to your group's client.

The below assignment descriptions are subject to change. Your individual portfolio will include your resume and APPLS time sheet <http://ccps.unc.edu/files/2012/10/SLC-Course-Timelog-Form.pdf>. 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.

Communication Audit (10%)

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 (10%)

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 (10%):

- Media relations guide
- Media list
- Media advisory
- Organizing a media tour
- PSA (2)
- Event flyers (5)
- Event materials
- Five testimonials
- Brochures (5)
- Website updates
- Relationship building strategy
- Speech script (2)
- Letter to the editor
- Informational Video
- Social Media

DATE	DAY	TOPIC/READING	ASSIGNMENT DUE
8/20	1	Overview Introductions Syllabus Clients	“About Me” Memo (in-class)
8/25	2	What is PR? Researching Clients PR Writing <i>Reading:</i> Preface, Introduction, AP Style Primer	Selecting Clients/Groups
8/27	3	Research and Communication Audits <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 4 (textbook) and see Sakai	Group Contracts Receive Communication Audit Assignment
9/1	4	No Class—Labor Day	
9/3	5	The Writing Process <i>Reading:</i> see Sakai	
9/8		Public Relations and Media Relations <i>Reading:</i> Chapters 6 & 11; p. 205; see Sakai	Receive News Release Assignment Sheet
9/10	6	<i>Activities:</i> Starting News Release	Communication Audit (group) Due
9/15	7	Fact Sheets and Backgrounders <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 6 (again); see Sakai	News Release Draft I Due Receive Fact Sheets/Backgrounder Assignment
9/17	8	In Class Writing Assignment	
9/22	9	Pitching and Pitch Letters <i>Reading:</i> Chapters 7 & 8	Fact Sheets/Background Draft I
9/24	10	<i>Activities:</i> Starting Pitch Letters	Receive Pitch Letter Assignment Sheet
9/29	11	Catch Up Day	
9/29	11		News Releases Draft II
10/1	12	EXAM DAY	
10/1	12		EXAM I
10/6	13	Newsletters <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 10; See Sakai	Pitch Letter Draft I Fact Sheets & Backgrounder Draft II
10/8	14	In Class Writing Assignment	Receive Newsletter Assignment Sheet

DATE	DAY	TOPIC/READING	ASSIGNMENT DUE
10/13	15	Website Writing <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 16; See Sakai	Newsletter Draft I
10/15	16	Hootsuite University	
10/20	17	New and Social Media <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 9; See Sakai	Pitch Letter Draft II
10/22	18	Hootsuite University	
10/27	19	Media Catching <i>Reading:</i> See Sakai	Newsletter Draft II
10/29		In Class Writing Assignment	
11/3	20	Public Relations Writing & Advocacy <i>Reading:</i> Chapters 12 & 13; See Sakai	Optional Documents Draft I
11/5	21	In Class Writing Assignment	
11/10	22	EXAM II	EXAM II
11/12	23	Speeches <i>Reading:</i> Chapter 14; pp. 211–212	Optional Documents Draft II Receive Group Presentation Assignment Sheet
11/17	24	Activities: Dos and Don'ts of Speeches	
11/19	25	No Class: I will be at a conference in Chicago	Email me questions about assignments Practice group presentations
11/24	26	Final Document Workshop	Bring All Documents Materials to Class
11/26	27	Thanksgiving Holiday	
12/1	28	Group Presentations	Group Presentation
12/3	29	Review for Final Exam	Final Portfolios Documents Due
12/5	30	FINAL EXAM DAY	Exam III Due at 5 p.m. (or earlier)

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.

