

Course Syllabus: MEJO 332.3 Spring 2023

Instructor: Christy Kirk

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Classroom: CA 21

Time: T/TH. 4:00- 5:15 p.m.

Appts: After class or by appointment on Zoom

Course Overview: This course is an applied writing skills laboratory and APPLES service-learning class. We will cover major communication tools of the public relations trade, including PR plans, news releases, media advisories, communication audits, feature articles, speeches, pitch letters, fact sheets, public service announcements and more.

The skills of writing are learned by doing; you will have ample opportunities to learn and improve.

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

- **quickly produce** accurate 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 many public relations agencies...)

- **professionally present materials in various acceptable formats,**
- **meet strict and sometimes multiple deadlines,**
- **develop and establish client relations** through service learning,
- **work as part of a creative team,**
- **and develop a complete PR portfolio.**

Prerequisites: To take this skills course as an undergraduate, you must have successfully completed **MEJO 153: News Writing** and **MEJO 137: Principles of Advertising and Public Relations**. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Required Texts: *The PR Style Guide: Formats for Public Relations Practice* (3rd Edition), by Barbara Diggs-Brown; and *The Associated Press Stylebook*. All assigned readings should be completed before the appropriate class sessions for which they are assigned to generate class discussion and ensure you're prepared to write. You should regularly read and watch local and national news broadcasts and follow top stories.

Reference Materials: Use of reference materials to double-check accuracy is encouraged.

News Content: Keep up with current events by reading *The Daily Tar Heel*, *Raleigh's The 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.

Assignments and Deadlines: All writing assignments must be typed, correctly formatted and turned in on time. For outside assignments, late papers 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. With an excused absence, you can turn in makeup assignments for exercises missed during a regular class period. You should email the instructor to request the assignment, which will be due at the beginning of the next class period. Makeup assignments not turned in within one week of the missed class, will receive a 0 grade.

Outside Assignments and APPLES clients: As part of the APPLES Service-Learning Program, you will work in tandem with classmates on behalf of a local nonprofit client to produce communication pieces for them. APPLES coordinators have supplied a list of organizations with contact names that have requested help, from which you can choose for whom you would like to volunteer your services (More info to come). You will be expected to do periodic check-ins on the APPLES experiences and meet with the instructor to discuss progress in your APPLES placement. Due dates for client pieces you produce are on the attached week-by-week syllabus. Throughout the semester, you should present materials to your client that you worked with them to produce and present them with a complete portfolio. The APPLES experience is valuable in that it provides professional pieces for your portfolio and gives you experience in working in the nonprofit realm. Do not forget, however, that you are representing the University in general and the public relations sequence in the community. ***Professionalism is always expected.***

Canvas: I encourage you to periodically check Canvas for announcements, assignments, grades and useful handouts and class readings. Additional reading materials and all other handouts are/will be posted on Canvas for your convenience. Please consult these materials to ensure you produce quality communication tools in this class.

Exams: Two exams (a midterm and a final) will be given. The midterm exam will be a 75-minute writing exercise. The final exam will be a 3-hour writing exercise that covers the full semester. 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.

Final Exams and Deadlines: External audiences that include clients, consumers and media personnel are relying on PR practitioners to present accurate, honest and relevant content and communication – sometimes immediately, and often on stringent deadlines. For that reason, adherence to strict deadlines is a crucial component of this course. Both

the midterm and the final exam are due on a “hard deadline” – meaning little to no flexibility. Failure to meet those deadlines will result in a 10-point per minute (late) deduction from the total exam grade for documents not submitted on time. Effective time management and the ability to prioritize (campaign development) during the exam period are essential. All exams are expected to be submitted on time.

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

(Since the University grading system does not calculate A+, an “A” final course grade requires a 96 or higher.)

In-class assignments 30%

Client assignments 30%

Midterm exam 15%

Final exam 15%

Participation (class/client) 10%

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, class participation is lacking, and 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, do not participate in class discussions, and fail to use rewrite opportunities.

Guidelines for Grading of Assignments

See the next sheet, which is a modified version of the MEJO 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 are expected to complete all assignments within the allotted time—as this is what's required in the real PR profession. Good writers write, so you will be given plenty of opportunities to perfect your speed and writing skills.
- Don't wait until the last moment to print your copy. Give yourself time to proofread. I will alert you when there are about 10 minutes remaining in class. EDIT, PROOF AND save, save, SAVE!
- Use the standard proofreading marks given in *The Associated Press Stylebook* for AP style quizzes and in-class editing assignments. NO HANDWRITTEN EDITS on assignments turned in to me.

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 penned-in material, correction fluid, type-overs, etc., will be penalized 10 points each. **NO HANDWRITTEN EDITS!**

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 the next class period after you receive the assignment back, no later than the beginning of the 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. Any mistakes missed the first time will be deducted on the second read. Proofread your rewrites carefully!
- Midterm and Final exams are excluded from the Rewrite Policy.

Grading Criteria for All Assignments

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

1. 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

1. 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

1. 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. Please note that MS Word SPELLCHECKER does not reliably catch spelling errors in ALL CAPS **TXET**. (See, it didn't catch that one). Please proof your work

Service Learning and Client Portfolio

You will be asked to partner with classmate(s) and serve as a PR consultant and communication professional for a local nonprofit. You will prepare several communications pieces, some in tandem and others independently. This activity will allow you to gain experience in a nonprofit setting that is valuable both to you as a student and to the community of which you are a part. The class is designed to have you become a working member of the organization and to reflect on what that means to your educational experience as a public relations student.

Remember: You will work with a client who is eager to use your skills. You are the PR professional, and they are relying on your expertise. You will develop client contact skills, which are essential for professional development. Be sure to include this experience on your resume and include any clips in your portfolio.

Please spend time with your client going over your assignments. Your supervisor should know what to expect from you at the end of the semester – no surprises! Periodically, I will request feedback from you and the client. If you have questions or concerns, feel free to review the online APPLES tutorial or contact an APPLES service-learning specialist directly to make this a positive learning experience.

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

1. An updated **resume** (including your service-learning work for this semester)
2. **Final time sheet** –
see: <http://www.unc.edu/apples/students/courses/index.html#Forms>
3. A **Communication Audit** (see Ch. 4) should provide an up-to-date overview of your nonprofit's communications activities, including background, issues, **client survey, survey analysis, SWOT/situational analysis**, product/service description, implementation methods, and evaluation strategies. Your report should be developed through discussions with people at your nonprofit and through an assessment of its current communication materials/personnel/platforms. The report will run an average of 15-20 pages.
4. The **Print News Release** may be either a hard news release (1 to 2 pages) or a feature news release (3 to 4 pages). The topic of the release is up to you and the client.
5. The **Public Relations Plan** should reflect a comprehensive, multimedia strategy to secure additional positive positioning and media coverage for your client; and make recommendations for social media support. The PR/Social Media Plan should highlight a campaign period between 6 to 12 months.
6. Additionally, working with the client, prepare **pieces of the client's choice**. These pieces must total at least four points and must be cleared with me. Deadlines for turning in the additional pieces will be on your week-to-week syllabus. Suggestions for pieces and point values follow, but other ideas are welcome. Be creative and feel free to suggest other client-approved projects for consideration.

news release	Prezi & script
PSA	feature series (3)
letter to editor	table-top display
media advisory	special event plan/budget
direct mail piece	backgrounder
pitch letter	media list from scratch (25 contacts)
flier	company or donor list (25 contacts)
fact/info sheet	PowerPoint with script
promotional letter	social media site setup & updates

The UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media'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 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 several the values and competencies included in the above link.

Specifically, 332 PR Writing aligns with the following values of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) and expects students to:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press;
- 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;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

NOTE: 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 assistance—and want to see you succeed.

General J-School Guidelines

ATTENDANCE:

University Policy

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Class Policy

Please communicate with me early about potential absences. Please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University approved absence.

(source: <http://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/>)

HONOR CODE

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system 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 C. A. Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Syllabus Changes: The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

ARS

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> Or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

TITLE IX

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim –titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or

the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered, and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>).

DIVERSITY STATEMENT: The J-School has adopted diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on prohibiting harassment and discrimination. In summary, UNC-CH 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. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB#5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919]966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

Course Summary:

Date	Details
Thu Jan 5, 2023	Page Course Introduction
Tue Jan 10, 2023	Assignment January 10: Welcome and Introductions
Thu Jan 12, 2023	Quiz AP Style Review 1/12

Date	Details
	Assignment January 12: PR Tools and Resources
	Quiz What are they?
Tue Jan 17, 2023	Assignment January 17: Intro to Apples
Thu Jan 19, 2023	Assignment January 19: PR Formats and More AP Style
Tue Jan 24, 2023	Assignment January 24: Doing Better Research
Thu Jan 26, 2023	Assignment January 26: Communication Audits
Tue Jan 31, 2023	Assignment January 31: Media Relations
Thu Feb 2, 2023	Assignment February 2: Media Kits & Media Advisories
Tue Feb 7, 2023	Assignment February 7: Fact Sheets
Thu Feb 9, 2023	Assignment February 9: News Release Essentials Round 1
Tue Feb 14, 2023	Assignment February 14- Wellbeing Day- NO CLASS
Thu Feb 16, 2023	Assignment February 16: News Release Essentials Round 2
Tue Feb 21, 2023	Assignment February 21: News Release Essentials Round 3
Thu Feb 23, 2023	Assignment February 23: News Releases, Incorporating Visuals
Tue Feb 28, 2023	Assignment February 28: Review for Midterm Exam
Thu Mar 2, 2023	Assignment March 2- Midterm Exam
Tue Mar 7, 2023	Assignment March 7: Broadcast Writing: Broadcast News Releases

Date	Details
Thu Mar 9, 2023	Assignment March 9: Broadcast writing, Public Service Announcements
Fri Mar 10, 2023	Assignment March 10-19 SPRING BREAK
Tue Mar 21, 2023	Assignment March 21: Speeches and Speech Writing
Thu Mar 23, 2023	Assignment March 23: Feature Writing and Pitches
Tue Mar 28, 2023	Assignment March 28: Feature, Guest Blog and Podcast Pitches
Thu Mar 30, 2023	Assignment March 30: Media Tours
Tue Apr 4, 2023	Assignment April 4: Profiles
Thu Apr 6, 2023	Assignment April 6 Wellbeing Day NO CLASS
Tue Apr 11, 2023	Assignment April 11: Letters to the Editor
Thu Apr 13, 2023	Assignment April 13: Newsletters
Tue Apr 18, 2023	Assignment April 18: Grant Writing and Proposals
Thu Apr 20, 2023	Assignment April 20: Portfolio Work Day
Tue Apr 25, 2023	Assignment April 25: Social Media Content Creation
Thu Apr 27, 2023	Assignment April 27- LDOC for this class- Social Media Marketing, Rou
Tue May 2, 2023	Assignment May 2- Final Exam- Portfolios Due