

## MEJO 732.001 - Public Relations & Strategic Writing - Spring 2023

**Instructor:** Professor Valerie “VK” Fields

**Office:** 229 Carroll Hall

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**Classroom:** CA 338

**Class Time:** M/W 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

**Office hours:** By appointment; feel free to email me with dates/times of your availability.

**Course overview:** This class is designed to give you hands-on experience writing to inform and persuade your publics, with an emphasis on digital and social media. It is structured as an applied skills lab with both in-class and out-of-class writing assignments and an additional element of broadcast production on behalf of business/organizational clients.

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

- **quickly produce** professional writing materials required in the public relations profession, with a particular emphasis on digital and social media;
- **integrate strategy** into communication tools to target appropriate/diverse audiences and media and to effectively advocate for a cause;
- **strategically manage** multi-platform communications to ensure message cohesiveness and consistency;
- **create and manage your own brand presence** through online resources.

**Prerequisites:** Graduate students should complete MEJO 730, Public Relations Foundations.

**One Required Textbook: Strategic Communications: Planning for Public Relations and Marketing**, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, by Laurie J. Wilson and Joseph D. Ogden; published by Kendall Hunt. And, one recommended resource: **Social media marketing all-in-one for dummies**, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (2017) by Jan Zimmerman and Deborah Ng and published by John Wiley & Sons in Hoboken, NJ. You may purchase the textbook through the UNC Student Stores (bookstore). Please also stay familiar with the **AP Stylebook** for the sections on working with the media. I assign **supplemental materials** as well – see the week-by-week schedule below and Sakai “Resources” tab 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.

**Laptops Required?:** Yes.

**Assignments and Deadlines:** All writing assignments must be typed 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 a failing grade. In the “real world,” computer glitches and printing problems happen, but are not excused. Leave yourself plenty of time to cope with these problems, complete professional work, and still make your deadline.

**Usage and Grammar Test:** If you have not yet passed the Usage and Grammar test (required for MAs before you graduate), do it this semester!

Sakai will serve as a hub for resources, assignments, updates, announcements and more.

- [Syllabus](#) – yes, you’ll find the syllabus there
- [Resources](#) – supplemental readings and assignment templates
- [Messages](#) – basically, it’s email for people in the class
- [Gradebook](#) – grades posted here
- [Assignments](#) – I will post in-class and homework assignments for you to access. You may submit them here as well, based on in-class instructions
- [Forums](#) – resource for you to post and respond to others’ posts.
- [Blogs](#) – (*No longer supported on Sakai*); however, you will create and regularly post on a blog this semester, on any topic of your choosing, and upload the blog post within the Assignment tab in Sakai. You may use another hosting service such as Weebly, Wix, Wordpress, etc. to develop and design your blog.

**Tests:** You’ll get to enjoy two tests – a midterm and a final. The midterm exam is open-book, open-note; the final is a closed-book, comprehensive examination. The final exam is also related to the writing and creative projects developed for an external client. 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 exam will result in an IN.

**Course Grade Calculation: Final course grades are calculated using the percentages listed below.**

In-class/Client assignments	35%	Grading scale for reporting final grade:
Blogging and branding	25%	H = High Pass (96+)
Midterm exam	15%	P = Pass (80-95)
Final exam	15%	L = Low Pass (60-79)
Attendance & Participation	10%	F = Fail (<60)

**Attendance:** Regular, on-time class attendance is your obligation, and you are responsible for all work, including tests and writing assignments, 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.

**Absences:** You may make up work you missed if an absence is pre-approved. Excused absences require written documentation submitted to me from an authorized UNC-CH official organization or governing body.

**Pep Talk:** This class will at intervals be time-consuming and difficult. Your first few assignments may possibly receive low scores, which can seem discouraging. However, if you put forth the effort, your work should improve throughout the semester, and this improvement will be reflected in your grades. ***Please, schedule a time to speak with me 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, so please ask!***

**Professional obligations**

- **Honor Code:** You are expected to conduct yourself within the guidelines of the [University honor system](#). 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. You may retrieve the full document, [The instrument of student judicial governance](#).
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** The UNC Hussman School Journalism and Media's adopted [diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements](#) in spring 2016 with accompanying goals. It complements the University policy on [Prohibiting](#)

[Harassment and Discrimination](#). In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

- **Harassment:** UNC does not tolerate harassment based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, disability, or for any other reason. It is also a violation of the Honor Code and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Title IX of the Educational Amendments. If you need assistance with a harassment issue or problem, bring it to my attention or The Office of the Dean of Students, [dos@unc.edu](mailto: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 [Accessibility Resources & Service Office website](#), call 919/962-8300, or use NC Relay 711.

**Accrediting values and competencies:** 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. 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 most relevant for this course are below:

**Specifically, 732 PR & Strategic 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.

## Assignment Guidelines

### In-class assignments:

- Ample time will be given in class to work on in-class assignments. Give yourself time to edit and proofread. Note: It is better to have quality work that's not yet complete than a completed assignment with errors! I will alert you when there are about 10 minutes remaining in class for assignments on deadline.

### Out-of-class assignments:

- 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, handwritten edits, etc., will be penalized 10 points each. NO HANDWRITTEN EDITS!

### Rewrites:

- You may rewrite an assignment (in class or out of class) that receives a failing or equivalent grade of **60 or lower**. The rewrite is due no later than the next class period after you receive the assignment back. 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. The rewrite policy does not apply to Midterm or Final exams.
- You must **FIRMLY attach the original work with your rewrite**. If no original is attached, the rewrite will not be graded.\* (*Does not apply to assignments originally uploaded via Sakai*).
- 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 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 (when applicable) and other formatting issues. Both are important, so please pay attention to detail.

### I. Writing

- + 2 to +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 +5 for excellence in quality of information gathered and used
- +2 to +5 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
- 10 to -20 for missing the lead entirely or burying it
- 10 for failure to include your contact information on pieces
- 10 for failure to include phone number, address, etc., of your organization/client

### 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 the same 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 15 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.

## Week-by-Week Class Schedule

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

**Readings:** StratComm textbook and (optional) Z&N SMMD book; supplemental items will be available on Sakai – Resources Tab  
**Homework/Exercises/Tests & Quizzes/Exams:** Sakai – Assignments and Tests/Quizzes tabs

Date	Topic and Assignments
	<b><i>*Read all textbook chapters and online reference materials in advance and be prepared to discuss at the beginning of class.</i></b>
Week 1 M/W Jan. 9 & 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Welcome &amp; Introductions! Review and discuss syllabus, and “Strategic Communications” textbook. Students should read the syllabus in advance – and be prepared to discuss the ‘Contents at a Glance’ section and VALS™ survey significance on Day 1.</li> <li>● Sign up for Adobe Creative Cloud account: <a href="http://adobe.unc.edu">adobe.unc.edu</a>; get familiar with Adobe Audition (audio) and Adobe Premiere Pro (video) in preparation for client broadcast production assignments</li> <li>● Complete VALS™ Survey and prepare to discuss content strategy to consumers -- Visit <a href="http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/presurvey.shtml">http://www.strategicbusinessinsights.com/vals/presurvey.shtml</a></li> </ul>
Week 2 M/W Jan. 16 & 18 <b>No Class on Mon., Jan. 16 – MLK Jr.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Select weekly blog topic, title, define audience profile (should include at least 5 demographic and 5 psychographic elements), and complete &amp; publish first post online; submit post for class via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>● <b>MLK Action Day</b></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 3, “Communications Research Methods”</li> <li>● Develop and submit link to Qualtrics survey or SurveyMonkey questionnaire</li> </ul>
Week 3 M/W Jan. 23 & 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>● Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 4, “Using Research for Effective Communications Planning”</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss StratComm textbook Appendix C, Industry and Organizational Codes of Ethics and Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 15 “Ethics and Professionalism”</li> <li>● Submit Strategic Planning Matrix and S.W.O.T. Analysis for assigned PR client case</li> </ul>
Week 4 M/W Jan. 30 & Feb. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>● Discuss topic from SMMD book, Book 1, “The Social Media Mix” and StratComm textbook, Chpt. 9, “Using Social Media for Message Delivery”</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio Module – Guest Presenter</li> <li>• Adobe Audition overview and Podcast/PSA production and editing lesson</li> </ul>
Week 5 M/W Feb. 6 & 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>• Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 1, “The Relationship-Building Approach to Communications”</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss topic from SMMD book, Book 2, “Cybersocial Tools”</li> <li>• Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 2, “Public Information and Persuasive Communication”</li> <li>• Complete a S.W.O.T. Analysis of four popular social media dashboards and make a professional recommendation; submit online via Sakai</li> </ul>
Week 6 M/W Feb. 13 & 15	<b>Monday, Feb. 13: NO CLASS – UNC-CH Wellbeing Day</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday; and Discuss topic from SMMD, Book 3, “Content Marketing”</li> <li>• Create a Strategic Planning Matrix to identify the problem and begin working in teams to develop a persuasive <b>multimedia</b> campaign to encourage and increase organ donation within and across diverse communities</li> </ul>
Week 7 M/W Feb. 20 & 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>• Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 5, “Setting Goals and Objectives”</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss topics from SMMD, Books 4 &amp; 5, “Twitter” and “Facebook”</li> <li>• Create a Social Media Plan, emphasizing Twitter, Facebook and IG for assigned client</li> </ul>
Week 8 M/W Feb. 27 & Mar. 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>• Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 7, “Key Publics”</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 6, “Creativity and Big Ideas”</li> <li>• Review StratComm textbook Appendix B “Strategy Briefs” and start briefs for Media Kit documents to launch new product on behalf of assigned client</li> </ul>
Week 9 M/W Mar. 6 & 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>• Review for Midterm Exam and turn in completed Strategy Briefs and Media Kit</li> </ul>
<b>March 8 – Midterm Exam</b>	<p><b>Midterm Exam</b> [Open Book and Open Notes – exam on Sakai]</p> <p><b>REMINDER: Have you taken the Usage and Grammar test?</b></p>
<b>No Classes on March 13, 15 – Spring Break</b>	

Week 11 M/W Mar. 20 & 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>● Video Module – Guest Presenter</li> <li>● Adobe Premiere Pro overview and video production and editing lesson</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read &amp; Discuss StratComm textbook, Chpt. 13, “Responding to RFPs”</li> <li>● Begin work on first draft of client PSA or broadcast production project; develop interview questions and subject profiles</li> </ul>
Week 12 M/W Mar. 27 & 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>● Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 8, “Messages, Strategies and Tactics”</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss topic from SMMD, Books 6 &amp; 7, “LinkedIn” and “Getting Visual”</li> <li>● Set up and/or Update your personal LinkedIn profile page</li> </ul>
Week 13 M/W Apr. 3 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> <li>● Read StratComm textbook, Chpts. 10 &amp; 11, “Calendaring and Budgeting” and “Implementation and Communications Management”</li> </ul>
Week 14 M/W Apr. 10 & 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss topic from SMMD, Book 8, “Other Social Media Marketing Sites”</li> <li>● Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 12, “Communications Measurement and Evaluation”</li> <li>● Begin work on first draft of client video project: PSA/Video News Release (VNR)/Promotional Video outline &amp; script</li> <li>● Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday</li> </ul>
Week 15 - M/W Apr. 17 & 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Begin finalizing multimedia Client Campaigns</li> <li>● Read StratComm textbook, Chpt. 14 “Presentations”</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Client Campaigns</li> <li>● Post on weekly blog topic; submit post via Sakai no later than 5 p.m. on Wednesday; final Blog Post</li> </ul>
Week 16 - M/W Apr. 24 & 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Client Campaigns</li> <li>● Last Day of Class; Final Exam review and submit Client Campaign materials</li> </ul>

**MONDAY, MAY 1**

**FINAL EXAM – 4:00 p.m.**

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(Meets weekly at 11:00 a.m. – M/W)