

**MEJO 332.4–Public Relations Writing – Spring 2023**  
**Monday/Wednesday (11-12:15)**

**Curtis Media Center- 301**

**Instructor:**  
**Professor Jules Dixon**

**Email:**  
**julesdixon@unc.edu**

**Classroom: CMC: 301**

**Office hours:**  
**\*\*By Appointment:**

**Email Professor Dixon**  
**to schedule**

**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 platforms, including news releases for print and broadcast, content for digital media, strategic feature pitches, speech writing, fact sheets, media advisories, public service announcements, direct mail and more. ***The skills of writing are learned by doing; you will have ample opportunities to learn by constant writing.***

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students should be able to

- **quickly produce** any of the basic, professional, written materials required in the public relations profession;
- **integrate strategy** into communication pieces to target appropriate/diverse audiences and media and to advocate effectively for a cause;
- **learn to present material professionally**, and
- **develop a personal, pre-professional public relations portfolio.**

**Prerequisites:** To enroll in this course as an undergraduate student, you must have successfully completed **MEJO 153: Writing and Reporting** and **MEJO 137: Principles of Advertising and Public Relations**. ***No exceptions.***

**Required Text:** ***The Associated Press Stylebook (newest edition)***. I will assign supplemental materials as

well – see Sakai (assignments and/or resources) 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. We will also have many opportunities for group/team work.

**Computer Supplies: Bring your laptop to class.** All work should be saved to an external drive, your own laptop or your email.

**Phones (calls and texts), Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram** and all other social networking activity on any device will not be allowed in class unless the platform is part of the day's lesson plan. **Please silence your phones and close all social media before class begins.**

**Reference Materials:** Use of reference materials – dictionary, thesaurus to double-check accuracy—is encouraged.

**News Content: Keep up with current events!** It's important to know what's going on in the world, and what issues your clients (in the future) face or will face. This makes you a more effective practitioner!

**Assignments and Deadlines:** All writing assignments must be typed, double-spaced 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 without prior notice by you —and confirmation by me.**

**Sakai:** All PowerPoint slide presentations and other handouts are/will be posted on Sakai for your convenience. Please see the Resources link. Please consult these materials to ensure that you produce quality communication tools in this class. **This syllabus is also filed under the Syllabus tab, and assignments will be posted in the Assignments folder.**

**Exams: You will have two exams/assessments – a midterm and a final.** The midterm exam will be a 50-minute writing exercise. **The final exam will be a longer writing exercise that covers the full semester.**

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

Grading Scale:	A = 94-100	B = 84-86	C = 74-76	F = below 60
	A. = 90-93	B- = 80-83	C- = 70-73	
	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D = 60-69	

<b>In-class assignments</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Midterm Exam/Assessment</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Final exam</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Participation (class/team)</b>	<b>20%</b>

**Please note:** Students who earn less than a C in the course will have to retake the class.

**ATTENDANCE:** *THIS CLASS WILL BE TAUGHT IN PERSON, ..but occasionally, we will have a need for class to be conducted via ZOOM.*

**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTIFY PROFESSOR DIXON (at least 24 hours in advance via email) if you are unable to be in class.**

## **TO JOIN CLASS VIA ZOOM:**

**ID: 5301615551**

**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!

### **Seeking Help:**

*If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with Professor Dixon.*

### **Diversity:**

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2015-2016 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. 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.

### **Special Accommodations:**

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities, visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

**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.**

Units requesting evaluation of a graduate program must also demonstrate how their master's graduates attain this additional core competency:

- **Contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.**

### Guidelines for Grading of Assignments

#### **In-class assignments:**

- Ample time will be given in class to work on in-class assignments. You may not always complete the piece, however. Don't worry. If you have a good first three paragraphs, you have what is necessary to write the piece.
- 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!**
- Assignments are due at the **beginning** of class time. Late assignments 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.**

#### **Rewrites:**

- You may rewrite any assignment (in class or out of class) that receives a grade of 60 or lower. The rewrite is due no later than two days after you receive the assignment back, no later than the beginning of that class period. It is your responsibility to meet this deadline.

The rewrite grade and the original grade will be averaged to determine your final grade for that assignment.

- **You must FIRMLY attach the original work with your rewrite. If no original is attached, the rewrite will not be graded.**

### Grading Criteria for All Assignments and Exams

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

#### I. Writing

- +5 for an exceptionally effective lead and supporting material
- +5 to +10 for exceptionally effective organization and treatment of material
- +2 for effective transition or introduction of material
- +2 to +10 for excellence in quality of information gathered and used
- +2 to +10 for excellence in determining targeting strategy
- 2 to -5 for ineffective or missing treatment of material, including, but not limited to, wordiness; use of jargon or clichés; inclusion of unnecessary or obvious information; redundancy; inappropriate choice or use of quoted material; incorrect word choice, including sexist language
- 5 to -10 for an ineffective lead that needs work or for lack of supporting material for lead
- 15 to -20 for missing the lead entirely or burying it
- 10 for failure to include contact information on pieces
- 10 for failure to include phone number, address, etc., of your organization or your client's organization

#### II. Mechanics

- 5 for each error or inconsistency in style
- 2 for excessively long or complicated sentences or paragraphs
- 5 for each spelling error (yes, typos are spelling errors)
- 5 for each punctuation error
- 5 for each grammatical error
- 10 for each minor factual error
- 50 for misspelling a proper name;** -10 for each subsequent misspelling of a proper name

#### III. Research/Gathering Information

- +/-5 to 10 for resource selection: quality and number of sources used; appropriateness of individual sources, including the level of expertise or authority involved
- +/-5 to 20 for thoroughness of material: existence of loose ends, holes, or unanswered questions; development of significant angles; inclusion of needed detail
- +/-5 to 15 for backgrounding; research necessary to make the work complete or to provide needed explanations

- +/-20 for handling of legal matters, such as libel, violation of legal right of privacy, and copyright violations
- +/-15 for addressing material to appropriate publics
- +/-15 for making the message or statement clear (i.e., a news peg; inclusion of key message)

## Service Learning/Portfolio

There are a number of relevant materials you might develop for a client – **particularly** if you take the initiative and use your growing knowledge of strategic communication to help your organization.

**Remember:** Through service learning, you will develop client contact skills, which are essential for professional development. Be sure to include this experience on your resume and include any communication items you produced/helped create in your online portfolio.

### Step one – **Building an Online Portfolio.**

If you haven't created a website/online portfolio, this is the semester to do it! There are a number of free website creation sites. Resources on Sakai may help you as you develop this portal.

### Step two – At the end of the semester, ***your online portfolio should include:***

1. An updated **resume**
2. A 1- to 2-page **reflection essay** – How did this experience/project 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 a client regarding its PR efforts?
3. **Profile** – Your profile is independent work and should run two to four pages. A profile is a feature article about a newsworthy person who either founded, directs or benefits from your client's services.
4. **FAQ or Fact sheet** – What questions might a student, potential funder or user or volunteer have about your client? What facts can be helpful? Your fact sheet is independent work.
5. **Additional piece** – You must also complete at least **one additional piece** as independent work 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, please let me know! This is not a complete list!***

- **EVENT MATERIALS**
- **FACT SHEET**
- **BROCHURE**
- **MEDIA LIST**
- **PRESS RELEASE**
- **(2) PSAs**
- **SPEECH**
- **MEDIA ALERT/ADVISORY**
- **SOCIAL MEDIA POS**

## MEJO 332 – Spring 2023 CLASS SCHEDULE

**(\*\*\*Note: This is ONLY A GUIDE for the semester, subject to change.  
You will be notified of any modifications.)**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
Jan 9	Introduction/Class Expectations	No assigned reading
Jan 11	Overview of PR Industry/Trends in PR	
<b>Jan 16</b>	<b>NO CLASS—MLK Holiday</b>	
Jan 18	The Art of Client Relations	
Jan 23	News Alerts/Advisories	
Jan 25	What Reporters REALLY Want!	
Jan 30	New/Social Media	
Feb 1	New/Social Media	
Feb 6	Photo Captions- Traditional	
Feb 8	Photo Captions- Social Media	
<b>Feb 13</b>	<b>NO CLASS- WELLNESS DAY</b>	
Feb 15	Crisis Relations	
<b>Feb 20</b>	<b>NO CLASS- Presidents Day</b>	
Feb 22	More Crisis Relations	
Feb 27	Media Junkets/Press Conferences	
Mar 1	Press Release Writing	
Mar 6	More Press Release Writing	
Mar 8	The Joy of PSA Writing	

**\*\*\*SPRING BREAK: Week of March 13th**

Mar 20	PSA Writing
Mar 22	Evaluation/PR Measurement
Mar 27	Building Media Lists
Mar 29	Building Media Lists
April 3	PR Pitch Writing
April 5	PR Pitch Writing
April 10	PR Pitching
April 12	PR Pitching
April 17	Integrated Marketing Basics
April 19	Integrated Marketing Basics
April 24	Crisis Relations Writing
<b>April 26</b>	<b><i>LDOC- Open Discussion/ Portfolio Review</i></b>

**MAY 1, 2023 \*\*\***

**\*\*\*FINAL EXAM: 4-6pm (Section 5)**