



COMM 318-21W
Public Relations Writing
Syllabus, Spring 2017
M, W, F – 10:25-11:15am
Corboy Law Center, Rm. 710

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

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Course Description: Writing is a baseline skill in public relations. Strong writing skills definitely give a student an edge in getting a great post-graduation job and continuing to advance in his or her communication career. In contrast, lack of strong writing skills is a definite career handicap. This is an advanced, writing-intensive course designed to expose students to professional-level public relations strategy and writing by focusing on communication objectives, techniques, styles and mechanics. Building on students' knowledge of the fundamentals of public relations, the course provides practical, real-world writing experience in diverse formats for a wide range of audiences. Students' writing and critical thinking skills are expected to improve over the semester.

Course Objectives:

- Engage students in the strategic process of public relations writing.
- Understand the importance of planning, pre-writing, editing and rewriting.
- Develop a strong working knowledge of writing mechanics and Associated Press style.
- Provide practical, hands-on experience in public relations writing that students can include in their portfolios.

Learning Outcomes:

Learn how to write press releases, media alerts, public service announcements, op-eds, blogs, key messages, executive bios, speeches, company fact sheets, social media content and more. Equally important, learn what needs to happen before writing that first word. The formula for meaningful content = research, preparation, writing and editing. By the end of the course, students will have the confidence and strong writing samples needed to thrive during job interviews.

Required Texts/Materials:

Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques, 8th Edition, by Dennis L. Wilcox, Bryan H. Reber

The Associated Press Stylebook 2015, by the Associated Press.

Supplemental Materials: Additional required materials may be posted on Sakai or provided in class. Students are responsible for such readings whether or not they are discussed in class.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:

Over the course of the semester, students will write press releases, blog entries, executive memos, a PSA, an executive speech, feature articles, social posts and other communications collateral.

Additionally, students will be required to read and give summaries on daily news coverage of local, national and international significance. There will be four quizzes throughout the semester, which will cover pre-determined topics in the AP Stylebook. They cannot be made up on another date. Short quizzes may be used to review discussions and readings. Attendance, participation and professionalism will affect the final grade. If you miss three or more classes, you will receive a zero for attendance. Your participation grade is based on *daily* class participation.

Grading: Students will be expected to know material covered in lectures. It will be critical to keep up with the assigned readings and on news here and around the world. Students should expect to write and edit materials before receiving a final grade. Editing is an incredibly powerful skill. Students will have opportunities to improve their work for higher grades on assignments 6,7,8,9 and 10 – after receiving written feedback from the instructor; only the final drafts of these assignments will be graded.

Becoming a strong writer takes time, patience and the ability to take risks. Grades will depend, in part, on the progress you demonstrate during the semester.

Classroom Manners:

To help foster a positive learning environment, please turn off cell phones and keep them in your bags. Laptops are welcome for notes and coursework, not entertainment. Be respectful of fellow students and be in your seat when class begins. Hold side conversations outside the classroom.

Attendance/Professionalism: You are expected to display the same level of professionalism and respect as required by work roles, through attending class regularly, arriving on time, being prepared for class, and remaining for the full class period. In addition, students are expected to actively participate in discussions and stay engaged during lectures.

The instructor does not recommend missing any class sessions as in-class exercises or homework could be given in your absence. *Late assignments will not be accepted.* If you have to miss a class, make arrangements to get any assignment from other students and complete it for the date it is due. Absences on the day of a test will not be acceptable.

Unexcused absences will impact both attendance and class participation grade, a component of the final grade. If you miss three or more classes, you will receive a zero for attendance. Your participation grade is dependent on participating in each class discussion.

Students with Disabilities:

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible,

given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Sexual Harassment:

Sexual Harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Loyola University of Chicago will not tolerate it by faculty, students or other employees, and will attempt to take prompt corrective action against any sexual harassment by or of its students, faculty and employees. Persons who believe they have been harmed by harassment of this kind should bring the conduct to the attention of the School of Communication dean's office. All complaints are taken seriously and no one reporting them will suffer reprisal or retaliation from the University. Such complaints will be treated in confidence to the extent feasible, given the need to conduct a thorough investigation and take corrective action.

School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity:

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty. Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents.

Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the

thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts.

Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://luc.edu/english/writing.shtml#source>

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. A student who submits the same work for credit in two or more classes will be judged guilty of academic dishonesty, and will be subject to sanctions described below. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

The office of the Dean of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans. Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml.

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations. *(The School of Communication policy is based entirely on and is consistent with the Academic Integrity Policy of the College of Arts & Sciences.)*

Assignments:

The university requires that in courses designated as Writing Intensive, there must be: 1) a special emphasis on writing, and 2) a variety of writing assignments integrated closely with the learning objectives of the course. There will be 16 writing assignments of various lengths and complexities. Following are the points for each assignment:

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|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Ch. 1 assignment | 10 points |
| 2. Ch. 2 assignment | 20 points |
| 3. Ch. 3 assignment | 20 points |
| 4. Ch. 4 assignment | 20 points |
| 5. Social media pitch | 30 points |
| 6. News release | 50 points |
| 7. Fact sheet | 50 points |
| 8. Media advisory | 40 points |
| 9. Feature news release | 50 points |
| 10. Op-ed | 60 points |
| 11. Audio news release | 40 points |
| 12. PSA | 30 points |
| 13. Blog post | 40 points |
| 14. Newsletter article | 40 points |
| 15. Memo | 40 points |
| 16. Speech | 60 points |

Total possible: 600 points

There will be in-class writing and editing time for assignments 5-16. You may use the classroom computers (saving your work on a flash drive or emailing it to yourself at the end of class) or bring your own laptop.

Students will have the opportunity to edit and rewrite five assignments – 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 – after receiving written feedback from the instructor; only the final drafts of these assignments will be graded.

Public relations practitioners write for professional audiences. Students should aim to produce professional-quality work: accuracy, quality, format, and neatness all count. Papers should be carefully proofread. Papers with typos or errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, fact, or style will be graded down. Incorrectly spelling the name of a person or organization or place, using the wrong title or an incorrect address, date or time, are considered “fatal errors” and will result in the loss of a full grade for each occurrence – no exceptions. Students are advised to use the

required Associated Press Stylebook and a reference book on English grammar for guidance on writing style.

All assignments are to be typed double spaced (unless instructed otherwise) in a 12-point font with one-inch margins with the student's name, date, and whether it is a first or final draft (if applicable) on the top of the first page. Papers should be stapled.

A hard copy of the assignment is due at the beginning of class on the specified date.

Grading Scale for Writing Assignments

- A 93-100 (565-600 points)
- A- 90-92 (550-560 points)
- B+ 87-89 (535-545 points)
- B 83-86 (515-530 points)
- B- 80-82 (500-510 points)
- C+ 77-79 (485-495 points)
- C 73-76 (465-480 points)
- C- 69-72 (445-460 points)
- D+ 65-68 (425-440 points)
- D 61-64 (405-420 points)
- F 60 or below (400 points or fewer)

Course Grading

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Assignments | 65 percent of grade |
| AP Stylebook quizzes (4) | 25 percent of grade |
| Attendance/Participation | 10 percent of grade |

Class Meeting Schedule

(This class may occasionally deviate from the course outline. The instructor reserves the right to make changes as needed to the course syllabus. Changes made will be announced in class. Reading assignments are to be completed before class on the date shown.)

Week 1

Jan. 18

Introductions and Course Overview

Jan. 20

Getting Organized for Writing

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 1

Assignment 1: Find a piece of public relations writing. Bring a hard copy to class on Mon. Jan. 23 and be prepared to discuss its objectives and audiences and why you think it is persuasive or not.

Week 2

Jan. 23

Becoming a Persuasive Writer

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 2

Holland, "Why Johnny Can't Write and Why Employers are Mad"

Assignment 2: Ch. 2, p. 38 – Shared Writing: Becoming a Persuasive Writer (due Mon. Jan. 30)

Jan. 25

Finding and Making News

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 3

Assignment 3: Ch. 3 pg 57 Writing Prompt – Papa John's publicity stunt (due Wed. Feb. 1)

Jan. 27

Working with Journalists and Bloggers

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 4

Assignment 4: Ch. 4, p. 67 Writing Prompt – ethics/false information (due Fri. Feb. 3)

Week 3

Jan. 30

AP Stylebook Quiz #1: A-F, with emphasis on abbreviations and acronyms, addresses, affect/effect, among/between, anybody/anyone, average, bad/badly, capitalization, cents, century, citizen, company names, compared to/with, composition titles, convince/persuade, corporation, dangling modifiers, datelines, decades, dimensions, directions and regions, dollars, e-mail, fewer/less, and fractions.

Assignment 2 due

Feb. 1

Pitches and Pitching

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 6, pp. 105-112 only

Assignment 3 due

Feb. 3

In-class writing and editing on social media pitch

Assignment 4 due

Assignment 5: Social media pitch (due Fri. Feb. 10)

Week 4

Feb. 6

Writing News Releases and Media Statements

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 5

Assignment 6: News release (first draft due Mon. Feb. 13; final draft due Mon. Feb. 20)

Feb. 8

In-class writing and editing on news release

Feb. 10

In-class writing and editing on news release
Assignment 5 due

Week 5

Feb. 13

Fact Sheets, Media Advisories and Media Kits
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 6 (pgs. 97-105)
Assignment 6 first draft due

Feb. 15

In-class writing and editing on fact sheet
Assignment 7: Fact sheet (first draft due Wed. Feb. 22; final draft due Wed. March 1)

Feb. 17

In-class writing and editing on fact sheet

Week 6

Feb. 20

In-class writing and editing on media advisory
Assignment 8: Media advisory (first draft due Mon. Feb. 27; final draft due Mon. March 13)
Assignment 6 final draft due

Feb. 22

In-class writing and editing on media advisory
Assignment 7 first draft due

Feb. 24

AP Stylebook Quiz #2: G-L, with emphasis on geographic names, governmental bodies, good/well, historical periods, half, in, incorporated, lay/lie, legislative titles.

Week 7

Feb. 27

News Features and Op-Eds
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 7
Assignment 8 first draft due

March 1

In-class writing and editing on feature news release
Assignment 9: Feature news release
(first draft due Mon. March 13, final draft due Mon. March 20)
Assignment 7 final draft due

March 3

In-class writing and editing on feature news release

Week 8, Mar. 6

Spring Break - NO CLASS

Week 9

Mar. 13

In-class writing and editing on Op-ed

Assignment 10: Op-ed (first draft due Mon. March 20; final draft due Mon. March 27)

Assignment 8 final draft due

Assignment 9 first draft due

March 16

In-class writing and editing on op-ed

March 18

Radio, Television and Online Video

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 9

Week 10

Mar. 20

In-class writing and editing on audio news release

Assignment 11: Audio news release (due Fri. March 29)

Assignment 9 final draft due

Assignment 10 first draft due

March 22

AP Stylebook Quiz #3: M-R, with emphasis on military titles, months, none, numerals, on, organizations and institutions, over, people/persons, percent, plurals, possessives, re-

March 24

In-class writing and editing on PSA

Assignment 12: 30-second PSA (due Fri. March 31)

Week 11

Mar. 27

Satellite Media Tours and Radio Media Tours

Assignment 10 final draft due

Mar. 29

Avoiding Legal Hassles

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 17

Assignment 11 due

Mar. 31

Tapping the Web and Digital Media

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 10

Assignment 12 due

Week 12

Apr. 3

In-class writing and editing on blog post
Assignment 13: Blog post (due Fri. April 10)

April 5

Newsletters, Brochures and Intranets
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 12

April 7

In-class writing and editing on newsletter article
Assignment 14: Newsletter article (due Wed. April 19)

Week 13

Apr. 10

Annual Reports
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 12 pp. 228-230
Assignment 13 due

Apr. 12

Email, Memos and Proposals
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 13

Apr. 14

****GOOD FRIDAY – NO CLASS**

Week 14

Apr. 17

****EASTER WEEKEND – NO CLASS**

Apr. 19

In-class writing and editing on memo
Assignment 15: Memo (due Wed. April 26)
Assignment 14 due

Apr. 21

AP Stylebook Quiz #4: S-Z, with emphasis on state, state names, television program titles, that, time, titles, who/whom, World Wide Web, years.

Week 15

Apr. 24

Speeches and Presentations
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 14
Assignment 16: Speech (due Mon. May 1 – see below)

Apr. 26

In-class writing and editing on speech
Assignment 15 due

Apr. 28

In-class writing and editing on speech

Final Exam

Monday, May 1, 9:00-11:00am