

COM 322-02: PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING
Tuesday & Thursday: (12:30 p.m. – 1:50 p.m.)
McEwen 201

Instructor: Toluwani Oloke, Ph.D.

Office: McEwen 304

Email: toluwani.oloke@fredonia.edu

Office Hours: M/W/F 1-2 p.m. or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to provide students with the core qualities of excellence in public relations writing. This course is centered on the student and their learning needs. The goal of this course is to prepare students to meet the demands of the marketplace with persuasive and professional public relations writing skills.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

- Develop a competency of the basic formats used most frequently in writing for public relations.
- Distinguish the purpose of each form of PR writing, and be able to make strategic decisions about when and how to employ them.
- Demonstrate writing that is compelling, logical, focused, persuasive, and accurate.
- Identify the target audience and employ a well-crafted message using the appropriate medium.

Over the first week of the course, you will identify a client and issue that will serve as your subject for assignments throughout the semester. Please be sure to think extensively about both the client and public relations issue, and ultimately, try to choose based on a personal interest or passion for the subject. Your writing will reflect the energy and effort you have for the subject you choose. The client may be an organization you have volunteered with in the past, or an organization where you would like to work. The client must be an existing organization. No hypothetical or imagined clients will be accepted. Most of your writing assignments will be completed on behalf of this client.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS & MATERIALS

- Wilcox, D. L. (2013). *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques* (8th Ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

- Kessler, L. & McDonald, D. (2016). *When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style* (9th Ed.), Boston: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Students may use older editions of the required texts insofar as the edition does not pre-date 2006.

CLASS FORMAT

The method of instruction for this course will combine lectures and discussions with class labs. The lectures will inform the class discussion, and the discussion will inform the application of the public relations tool. Over the course of these labs, students will generate news releases, fact sheets, speeches and speech memos, and, ultimately, a strategic communications plan. Each lab will include an opportunity for students to receive constructive critiques of writing from the instructor and classmates. The goal is for students to sharpen their analytical and strategic communications abilities through hands-on experiences.

CLASS POLICIES

Academic Integrity: The students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Student and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

Violations of the student honor code include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:
 - Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
 - Submitting a document or assignment, which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.
- B. Unauthorized Use of Materials or Resources ("Cheating"). A student shall not use unauthorized materials or resources in an academic activity. Unauthorized materials or resources shall include:
 - Any paper or project authored by the student and presented by the student for the satisfaction of any academic requirement if the student previously submitted substantially the same paper or project to satisfy an academic requirement and did not receive express authorization to resubmit the paper or project.
 - Any materials or resources prepared by another student and used without the other student's express consent or without proper attribution to the other student.

- Any materials or resources which the faculty member has notified the student or the class are prohibited.
- Use of a cheat sheet when not authorized to do so or use of any other resources or materials during an examination, quiz, or other academic activity without the express permission of the faculty member, whether access to such resource or materials is through a cell phone, PDA, other electronic device, or any other means.

Class Participation: Students are expected to actively participate in class discussion and in-class activities. Engagement will exercise critical thinking and evaluation skills. Students are expected to (1) show due respect to their peers and the instructor while taking part in class discussions and activities; (2) avoid unnecessary disruption during class time (e.g. having private discussions, texting or chatting on the computer/phone, visiting websites not related to the course, doing work for other classes); (3) avoid negative language or impolite behaviors. Final course grades may be reduced by 2% for each class in which you engage in these sorts of behaviors

NOTE: Students who are caught using their phones during class times will be asked to leave the class and considered absent for that day.

Late Papers/Assignments/Incompletes: Late assignments will be accepted on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of the instructor. For emergency circumstances, students should provide a note from Student Affairs.

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to be present and on time for every class period. If it is the case that a student must be tardy or absent from a class meeting, it is their responsibility to inform the instructor before class time for assignments. Excused absences require documented extenuating circumstances such as serious or contagious illness, caregiving for a family member with an illness, official university business or official government business (i.e. military duty, jury duty, subpoena, summons). More than two unexcused absences will result in a full letter grade drop in your final grade i.e. you get a B instead of an A if you have two unexcused absences during the semester.

In cases of inclement weather, please refer to official University channels (i.e. UF homepage, emergency texts and e-mails) for class cancellations.

Presentation Rule: **Appropriate professional** dressing is required for all presentations.

E-mails: The instructor will make every attempt to respond to e-mails in a timely fashion (typically within 24 hours) Monday through Friday – barring unforeseen priority obligations (i.e. research deadlines, University engagements, meetings, personal contracts). Responses to e-mails sent over the weekend may vary.

Laptop Computers and Other Electronic Devices: Personal computers are allowed for note taking – unless otherwise specified by the instructor – provided the computer is not an obvious distraction to the owner or other students.

Cellular/Digital/Smart Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Students are asked to silence and stow away cell phones or personal messaging devices of any kind prior to the start of the class period.

Food & Drinks: With respect to the length of each class meeting, food will be permitted as long as it meets “library appropriate” criteria. Snack-style foods – not requiring heating and/or utensils to consume – are acceptable. Drinks should include a sealable cap, lid or cover. Please refrain from consuming foods or drinks with intrusive odors. The instructor determines final decisions on the appropriateness of foods and drinks in the classroom.

Students with Disabilities: Students are encouraged to utilize the University’s student resources if it is the case that they require assistance in the classroom.

ASSIGNMENTS

*Writing Assignments	Backgrounder Biography Client Selection Crisis Communication Paper Fact Sheet Goals & Objectives News Features News Release Online News Release Pitch Letter Resume & Cover letter	30%
Communication Plan	Executive Summary Situation Analysis Goals & Objectives Target Audiences Strategies Tactics Timeline Budget Measurement/Evaluation	40%
Communication Plan Presentation		15%
Participation		15%
Total:		100%

*writing assignments are subject to change

GRADING SYSTEM

High Achievement	A = 100 – 90%	A (93)	A- (90)
Meets Expectations	B = 89 – 80%	B+ (87)	B (83) B- (80)
Below Expectations	C = 79 – 70%	C+ (77)	C (73) C- (70)
Inadequate Performance	D = 69 – 60%		
Failure	E = 59 – 0%		

GRADING RUBRIC: Presentations, Writing, and Research & Sourcing.

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Less than satisfactory	Points
Topic	Assignment describes, contextualizes, and conceptualizes topic and subject matter in an excellent manner. 25 pts	Assignment adequately covers topic and subject matter but lacks depth and insight. 13 pts	Assignment information inadequately covers and misses the point of topic and subject matter. 5 pts	25 points
Presentation	Message is engaging, compelling, attention getting, comprehensive and easily understandable. The presentation follows style and formatting instructions in lecture PDFs, writing samples, videos and readings. Presents ideas, thoughts, and concepts in a cogent and organized manner. 25 pts	Message made an adequate presentation, but additional effort is needed to make the work more compelling, attention getting and engaging. Piece has some style and formatting issues and needs tighter organization and structure. 13 pts	Presentation is not compelling, attention getting or engaging. It has many style and formatting issues and concepts and ideas are presented in a disorganized and incoherent manner. 5 pts	25 points

Writing	Assignment contains excellent grammar, spelling, punctuation and syntax. Includes descriptive and persuasive language. Piece is factually accurate and utilizes AP style. Ideas, thoughts, and messages are superbly conveyed in the written word. Lead includes the five Ws. 25 pts	Syntax is clear and the relatively few grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors to not impede understanding. Lead is adequate, but piece has some AP style issues. 13 pts	Syntax is sometimes garbled and errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling disrupt understanding. Piece has numerous AP style errors and lead is unclear and uninteresting. 5 pts	25 points
Research & Sourcing	Assignment demonstrates excellent research and sourcing, and provides attribution and links to websites and other sources when needed. 25 pts	Assignment demonstrates adequate research and sourcing, but additional attribution may be needed. Links to websites and other sources are provided in an adequate manner. 13 pts	Adequate research, sourcing, attribution is minimal or missing. No links to website and other sources are provided. 5 pts	25 points
Total points				100

COURSE & INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS

Students are expected to provide honest and constructive feedback on the course and instructor; the information provided will assist the University and instructor in providing the best education to students.

The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus at any time; changes will be announced in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Introduction to course syllabus review. PR vs. Journalism vs. Advertising

Week 2

Framework of PR Writing (*Read Wilcox Chapter 1*)

Reporting vs Writing for PR.

Resume and Bio Brief Due at end of class

Week 3

Communication Plan (Preparing for Writing) **Read Wilcox Chapter. 18**

Comma Rules, importance of accurate grammar, spelling, facts. Grammar review. Planning, Class Exercise: SWOT Analysis, (SMART).

Week 4

Avoiding Legal Hassles Read Wilcox chapter 11

You will choose a company and act as a public relations specialist for this company for the duration of class. Assignments will be geared toward your chosen company. You will end the semester with a portfolio of work, including a communications plan and media kit introducing a new product or service for your organization. Internal Communication
Assignment Due: Situation analysis of your company (8-10 pages) due at beginning of class

Week 5

Types of Writing/ Writing Formats (emails, memos, proposals). **Read Wilcox Chapter 13**
Class Exercise: Internal Memo/Email introducing your client's challenges and your proposed solution(s)

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SECTION DUE

Week 6

Persuasive Writing/Ethics and Professionalism (TARES Model) **Read Wilcox Chapter 2**

Persuasive writing, advocacy. Internal Communication

Assignment: Draft a newsletter article for your company's employee magazine introducing the challenge and solution you identified last week:

Due: At start of class on Tuesday

Week 7

Finding and Generating News

Read Wilcox Chapter 3

TARGET AUDIENCES AND STRATEGIES SECTION DUE 2/14

External communications: finding and exploiting news opportunities.

Assignment: Identify 5 topics and a key message for each topic. Identify the target audience for each message. What tactic would you use for each?

Assignment Due: At start of class

Week 8

News Releases

Read Wilcox Chapter 5

TACTICS AND TIMELINE SECTIONS DUE

Class Exercise: Create boiler plate for your company. Due at the end of class on 2/23

Assignment: News releases: write two, using different angles, identifying target audiences and media.

Assignment Due: At start of class on Thursday

Week 9

Media Relations and Crisis Communication

Read Wilcox Chapter 4

Crisis Communication

Assignment: Position papers Due at the start of class

Week 11

Media Kit, Fact Sheets, Pitches and Advisories. **Read Wilcox Chapter 6**

BUDGET SECTION DUE

Media kits: content, purpose.

Assignment 1: Prepare a one page fact sheet for your client. Due in class

Assignment 2: Write a feature article introducing your new product or Service. Research publications so you target the correct one. Identify key messages. Feature Due at start of Class on.

Week 12

Social Media and PR. **Read Wilcox Chapter 11**

Writing for external social and other digital media.

Class Exercise: Write a Digital Media Release, Facebook

Post, Tweet, Blog Post. Work due end of class on 3/23.

Week 13

Intranets, Brochures, Newsletters

Read Wilcox Chapter 12

WORK ON FINALIZING YOUR COMMUNICATION PLANS (No class)

Week 14

Final Presentations

Final Presentations

Week 15

Final Presentations

Final Presentations

SYLLABUS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM (REQUIRED OF ALL STUDENTS).

Print this form, Sign and Return by January 10, 2017

STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I, _____, HAVE RECEIVED AND
READ THE SYLLABUS FOR PUR 4100.

By signing this form, I indicate my unreserved consent and agreement with the instructions and regulations stated in this syllabus. It is my sole responsibility to refer to this syllabus for guidelines as stated.

SIGNED: _____

PRINT NAME: _____

DATE: _____