PUR 4100: Writing for Public Relations // Syllabus

Section B-52C

Spring semester 2016
Mondays, 2--4:40 p.m., AC 2, Room 258

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Office: none. See department secretary Kate Caylor.
Phone: 561-818-2946
Office Hours: Before and after class in room 258, and by appointment

Course Description

Introduction to the content, format and style of multiple public relations tools including content for traditional and digital media. You will learn to write clearly and effectively in all areas of communication.

Class participation is not recommended; it is required. Learning to write is an interactive process. Your work will be critiqued in class, and you will critique the work of your colleagues.

Prerequisites

PUR 3000, MMC 3104C, and full admission into upper division program.

Course Objectives

To provide public relations majors the opportunity to learn news judgment, improve writing ability and understand the basics of media releases, public service announcements, editing and proofreading. Emphasis will be placed on writing for all media and mastering AP Style. There will be exposure to corporate and non-profit advertising, newsletters, media relations, and proper business writing including cover letters, cover memos and e-mail/internet writing, within the context of ethical public relations practice and the advantages of the first amendment.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will recognize and use principles and techniques of writing for public relations.
- Students will comprehend issues related to how to reach audiences.
- Students will improve their understanding of how writing integrates with public relations.

Required Texts, Readings and Equipment:

1) The 2015 edition of “AP Stylebook” is required. Find it at the bookstore, online, and by online subscription (http://www.apstylebook.com/?do=product&pid=OLN-917360).

2) Online readings are listed below. Look for additional assignments in class re-caps.
3) You are required to read daily the New York Times. Free copies are available on the BBC campus and you can access online content free through an FIU subscription program at this Web address: https://myaccount.nytimes.com/verification/edupass

4) Store copies of all assignments on a flash drive and bring it to every class.

5) In-class handouts and other assigned readings.

Assignments

Assignments are judged for content, originality, creativity, accuracy, format, grammar, spelling, punctuation and research. For emailed assignments, create a Word file in 12-point Times Roman font with 1-inch margins. Instructions will be given for blog posts, social media, and audio and video projects.

You will be given a firm deadline for each assignment. If you cannot attend the class at which a paper is due, that paper must somehow find its way into your instructor’s mailbox by the start of the class period. **Late papers will not be accepted** unless your excuse deserves serious consideration. Papers not turned in by the deadline receive an “F” grade. Fiction is not acceptable, nor is poetry. Plagiarism results in an automatic "F" for the assignment.

Attendance Policy

You are required to attend class on-time. Anyone with one unexcused absence will see his or her grade sharply decline. **ANYONE WITH TWO UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL FAIL THE COURSE.** In certain cases, absences may be excused. It is your responsibility to contact the instructor within one business day of an absence in order to discuss it. It is also your responsibility to get the course notes, handouts or assignments, should you miss class or be late.

Exams

There are news reading assessments and AP style quizzes, as listed on the course schedule.

Grading

Your final grade in the course will be computed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments (in class and out of class)</th>
<th>85 percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and class participation/</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes and RATs</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Assignment Grading Scale is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Exemplary work worthy of commendation from client or supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Work is good enough to be published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Work is good enough to be published and requires minor editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>Work requires editing or more research before publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Work requires significant editing, rewriting and research before publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Work requires extensive editing, rewriting and/or research before publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>Work not publishable; requires at least one revision for writing and content</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Work not publishable; requires at least two revisions for writing and content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Work not publishable; requires two or more revisions for writing and content</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>61-71</td>
<td>Work does not fulfill professional requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>60 or less</td>
<td>Work contains spelling error of subject’s name; assignment is missed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Work contains plagiarized material</td>
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The Semester Grading Scale is as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91-94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.5-91</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-87.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>81-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.5-81</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>74-77.4</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>71-74</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>61-71</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>60 or less</td>
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Computer Use

It should go without saying that students are expected to treat all hardware and software in the labs with care. Anyone who intentionally damages the equipment will be ejected from the course. Knowingly infecting a computer with a virus, destroying or tampering with programming, duplicating software, snooping through files other than your own can result in university disciplinary action and criminal prosecution.

Academic Honesty

Florida International University outlines academic misconduct as follows:

- Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

- Misconduct includes: Cheating – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. Plagiarism – The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as
the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

Any student who fails to meet these expectations will not only fail the course, but will also be reported to the Chair of the Department of Journalism & Broadcasting and to the Dean of SJMC.

**Course Outline**

Students should expect a writing assignment every week and to revise it at least once. Class discussion will follow the following schedule, which is subject to change:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS DATE</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT DUE THAT DATE</th>
<th>CLASS TOPICS (with readings)</th>
<th>RATIONALE</th>
<th>RATs and QUIZZES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 11</td>
<td>Introductory readings</td>
<td>1) Introduction to course</td>
<td>To secure an internship or job in public relations, you must have a strong, perfectly spelled cover letter and engage through your LinkedIn profile. Writing, distributing and posting press releases is a fundamental part of a PR person’s job. Learn the form and function.</td>
<td>RAT on key course elements and introductory readings</td>
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<td>2) Cover letter and LinkedIn profile</td>
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<td>3) Fundamentals of writing press releases, part 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 18</td>
<td>Cover letter and LinkedIn profile</td>
<td>NO CLASS. Martin Luther King holiday.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 25</td>
<td>1) Edited press release (no revisions)</td>
<td>1) Writing press releases, part 2</td>
<td>PR firms create and manage FB pages and Twitter accounts. Master the content and engagement rules of social media. How do you build brand and interact with the public?</td>
<td>AP Quiz 1 (due next week)</td>
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<td>2) Revised cover letter</td>
<td>2) Building media and blogger lists</td>
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<td>3) Creating media kits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 1</td>
<td>1) Press release and media list</td>
<td>Social media through Facebook and Twitter content; posts, campaigns: building audiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>News quiz</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2) Media kit checklist and contact list (no revisions)</td>
<td>Writing blog posts</td>
<td>Media kits are becoming digital. Create a kit for a local artist that fulfills all media needs</td>
<td>RAT on blog posts and features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writing features</td>
<td></td>
<td>AP Quiz 2 (due next week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 8</td>
<td>1) Blog post</td>
<td>Writing features</td>
<td>Blog posts are a better way to reach audiences. Send your message with no filters.</td>
<td>AP Quiz 3 (due next week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>With fewer journalists, you’ll be writing more news stories. They will likely be features.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Assignment Details</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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</table>
| Feb. 22    | 1) Feature story  
2) Revised blog post  
3) Writing website content/SEO/SEM/Keywords  
4) Websites need to be fed fresh content. PR firms are looked to for content that’s easy to find through Web searches.  
5) News quiz                                                                 |                                                                      |
| Feb. 29    | 1) Website page with SEO/SEM  
2) Revised feature  
3) Writing and placing op-eds and letters to the editor  
4) Law and ethics/PRSA Code of Ethics  
5) Your client needs to be heard on an important topic. A letter to the editor or an op-ed is an easy solution. Convincing an editor to publish it is harder.  
6) AP Quiz 4 (due next week)                                                                 |                                                                      |
| March 7    | 1) Op-ed/letter to editor  
2) Revised website page with SEO/SEM  
3) Writing for broadcast: video scripts and PSAs  
4) Writing for the ear instead of the eye requires a different approach, even if the message is the same.                                                                 |                                                                      |
| March 14   | NO CLASS. Spring break.                                                                 |                                                                      |
| March 21   | 1) Revised Op-ed  
2) Updated LinkedIn  
3) PSA analysis and video script  
4) Content marketing: information, infographics  
5) Content marketing is the future of online PR. It’s an opportunity for you to be creative with words, images and video.  
6) RAT on content marketing                                                                 |                                                                      |
| March 28   | 1) Media alert  
2) Revised content marketing  
3) Story pitches to news media and bloggers: identifying story ideas, crafting pitches, following up  
4) Along with writing press releases, you’ll spend a lot of time pitching stories to traditional news media and bloggers.  
5) News quiz                                                                 |                                                                      |
| April 4    | 1) Story pitch  
2) Revised media alert  
3) Final assignment (no revisions)  
4) Wikipedia pages  
5) Governments, non-government agencies, non-profits, high-profile individuals, events, corporations and individuals use Wikipedia to share information. The objective is PR, the writing style is not.  
6) RAT on Wikipedia                                                                 |                                                                      |
| April 11   | 1) Wikipedia page  
2) Revised story pitch  
3) Crisis management: response, strategy, execution  
4) Sometimes things go wrong, very wrong. You will have to find the words to make them right.  
5) Questions on final assignment                                                                 |                                                                      |
| April 18   | 1) Crisis management team project  
2) Revised Wikipedia page (if needed)  
3) Crisis management team presentations  
4) Questions on final assignment                                                                 |                                                                      |
| April 25   | Final assignment due  
2) No class, no final exam                                                                 |                                                                      |
READINGS (Links tested on Dec. 20)

1) COURSE INTRODUCTION: Read before first class – RAT on Jan. 11

Social media is not the future of public relations – storytelling is.

The New Look of Public Relations – A Dissenting View

3 Reasons why Content is Changing Public Relations

7 PR trends you need to know in 2016
http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnhall/2015/12/13/7-pr-trends-you-need-to-know-in-2016/

7 content marketing trends to watch in 2016
http://socialmediaweek.org/blog/2015/12/content-marketing-trends-watch-2016/

2) COVER LETTER & LINKEDIN: Read for first class – Jan. 11

Chaplin School guide to getting a job (on Blackboard)

10 Resume Mojo Boosters Most People Miss | LinkedIn

The Online Activity That's Keeping You Unemployed
http://mashable.com/2013/09/16/online-activity-unemployment/

3) PRESS RELEASES: Read for class on Jan. 11

PR Newswire’s Knowledge Center: press release quick tips
http://www.prnewswire.com/knowledge-center/pr-quick-tips/

Sample press release
http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/home/sample-press-release/

Effective Press Releases and Distribution Channels

7 tips for writing a killer press release (watch the 1:45 video, too)
http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/7_tips_for_writing_a_killer_press_release_16288.aspx

Tips for writing an effective press release

Media Directories & Media Research
http://libguides.stthomas.edu/content.php?pid=135829&sid=1163689
4) MEDIA KITS: Read for class on Jan. 25

Press Pages and Media Kits: Include These 7 Items to Please Reporters
https://zapier.com/blog/best-press-kit/

Understanding Media kits, Brand kits and the One Sheet (slide show)

What to put in a Media kit or Press Kit

Forget the Media kit, Create a Toolkit
http://www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com/blog/2015/07/01/forget-the-media-kit-create-a-toolkit/

Giving Tuesday Social Media Toolkit (example)

5) FACEBOOK: Read for class on Feb. 1

Social Media is a Tactic not a Strategy
http://ries.typepad.com/ries_blog/2011/05/social-media-is-a-tactic-not-a-strategy.html

Posts Tagged mashable eye tracking study
http://www.socialmediamanagement.net/blog/tag/mashable-eye-tracking-study/

Infographic: The Optimal Length for Every Social Media Update and More
https://blog.bufferapp.com/optimal-length-social-media

Research: The Emotions that Make Marketing Campaigns Go Viral
http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/10/research-the-emotions-that-make-marketing-campaigns-go-viral

The Top 4 Nonprofit Social Media Campaigns of 2013 (And What You Can Learn)

6) TWITTER: Read for class on Feb. 1

6 Creative Ideas for a High Impact Twitter Campaign
http://www.heliosdesign.co.za/blog/web/high-impact-twitter-campaign.html

How to Write a Great Tweet
http://www.alleywatch.com/2014/05/how-to-write-a-great-tweet/

Tips for writing better tweets
http://www.prdaily.com/socialmedia/Articles/Tips_for_writing_better_tweets_15154.aspx

* HCC2103 Twitter Campaign (on Blackboard)

Write a Week’s Worth of Tweets with This Guide to Twitter
http://workreadplay.com/tweets-night/

4 Memorable Twitter Campaigns of 2013
http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2320368/4-Memorable-Twitter-Campaigns-of-2013
8 Compelling ways to tell 140 Character Stories on Twitter
http://www.jeffbullas.com/2015/01/24/8-compelling-ways-to-tell-140-character-stories-on-twitter/

5 ways to Write Better Tweets (has live practice tool)
https://www.hallaminternet.com/2015/5-ways-to-write-better-tweets/

The World Cup's #AskPitbull Twitter Campaign is a Beautiful Failure (good video)
http://www.complex.com/sports/2014/06/world-cup-ask-pitbull-campaign-on-twitter

7) **WRITING FOR INSTAGRAM:** Read for class on Feb. 1

5 things to know about writing captions on Instagram
http://blogs.wsj.com/briefly/2015/02/04/5-things-to-know-about-writing-captions-on-instagram/

10 pro tips for Instagram
http://www.cision.com/us/2015/07/10-pro-tips-for-instagram/

Instagram cheat sheet: 14 tips to master it all
http://www.bitrebels.com/design/instagram-cheat-sheet-14-tips-to-master-it-all-infographic/

8) **BLOG POSTS:** Read for class on Feb. 8 – RAT

The Five Essential Elements of an Influential Blog

How to Make Your Blog Posts SEO-Friendly [Checklist]

How to Create a Blog Post in WordPress (video)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vX0DMAjtZZg

9) **FEATURE WRITING:** Read for class on Feb. 15

* Feature story structure analysis: DJ Jordan Sanchez profile (on Blackboard)

* Feature story structure analysis: Cuban artist Yuniel Delgado Castillo profile (on Blackboard)

* Feature Story 10 PDF (on Blackboard)

* Feature Overview UIL, from University of Texas University Scholastic League (on Blackboard)

How to Write a Profile Feature Article
https://www.nytimes.com/learning/students/writing/voices.html

The Secret to Writing Stronger Feature Articles
http://www.writersdigest.com/online-editor/the-secret-to-writing-stronger-feature-articles

The Secrets of Writing Smart Long-Form Articles that go Absolutely Viral
10) WEBSITE CONTENT & SEO: Read for class on Feb. 22

23 Actionable Lessons from Eye-Tracking Studies

Public Relations & SEO: A New Skill for New PR Practitioners
http://www.ttuhub.net/public-relations-seo-a-new-skill-for-new-pr-practitioners/

Top 15 SEO Content Writing Tips for New Writers

30 SEO Terms Every Non-SEO Should Know
http://www.websitemagazine.com/content/blogs/posts/archive/2015/03/24/30-seo-terms-every-non-seo-should-know.aspx

11) OP-ED / LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Read for class on Feb. 29

How to Write an Op-Ed Article
https://apps.carleton.edu/news/media_relations/op_ed_guidelines/

4 essentials for getting your op-ed published
http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/4_essentials_for_getting_your_oped_published_16530.aspx

Daily examples of op-eds from DailyOpEd
http://www.dailyoped.com/

TIP SHEET: Writing Letters to the Editor
http://watchdogwire.com/blog/2014/01/10/tip-sheet-writing-letters-to-the-editor/


12) MEDIA ALERTS: Read for class on March 7

How to write a media alert

The Difference Between a Media Alert and a Press Release

13) WRITING FOR BROADCAST: Read for class on March 21

The Process of Writing News // chapter five: writing for broadcast
http://processofwritingnews.wordpress.com/chapter-five-writing-for-broadcast/

Writing for the Broadcast Media
http://myweb.stedwards.edu/corinnew/writing/03-15.html

10 Rules for Broadcast Writing
http://prezi.com/ex7d5hy5u8ol/10-rules-for-broadcast-writing/
Preparing Public Service Announcements

Creativity Tips: How to Write a Public Service Announcement (PSA)

14) CONTENT MARKETING: Read for class on March 28  (Asterisk indicates new REV-2 content)

* The best infographics of 2015
http://blog.visme.co/best-infographics-2015/

* 10 types of infographics
http://blog.visme.co/types-of-infographics/

* A beginner’s guide to creating infographics with Visme
http://blog.visme.co/how-to-create-infographics/

* FTC issues enforcement policy statement and business guidance on native advertising

Infographics as press releases: 3 beautiful examples
http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/Infographics_as_press_releases_3_beautiful_example_16145.aspx

5 Infographics to Teach You How to Easily Create Infographics in PowerPoint [+ TEMPLATES]

Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Native Advertising (HBO) – YouTube
https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=E_F5GxCwizc

Content Marketing Doesn’t Work (read all four pages)
http://www.forbes.com/sites/miketempleman/2015/08/17/content-marketing-doesnt-work/
(NOTE: Copy and paste link into browser.)

15) STORY PITCHES: Read for class on April 4

Time magazine’s editor: How to pitch reporters
http://www.ragan.com/Main/Articles/46264.aspx?goback=.gde_1767127_member_216546972#

How to Pitch: Outreach Tips from Journalists
http://www.buzzstream.com/blog/how-to-pitch-outreach-tips-from-journalists.html

How to Pitch Fashion Bloggers (an interview with bloggers)
http://theprcloset.tumblr.com/post/86888432819/pitchingfashionbloggers

How to Write a Pitch and Get Noticed
http://www.successfulblogging.com/how-to-write-a-pitch/

4 Tips for Writing Email Pitches That Reporters Will Read
Pitch, Please: Journalists Sound off on Media Relations
http://www.adweek.com/prnewser/pitch-please-journalists-sound-off-on-media-relations-12/117245

Bloggers and PRs: the 10 commandments
https://econsultancy.com/blog/64101-bloggers-and-prs-the-10-commandments#i.1v48hbc16u2dnf

The Dos and Don'ts of Pitching Journalists on Social Media
http://mashable.com/2013/09/16/pitch-journalist-social-media/

16) WIKIPEDIA: Read for class on April 11

How to edit a Wikipedia page (PowerPoint on Blackboard)

Wikipedia: draft best practice guidelines for PR

Wikipedia: conflict of interest (rules for editing pages)

17) CRISIS MANAGEMENT: Read for class on April 18

Crisis Communication Plan: A PR Blue Print
http://www.niu.edu/newsplace/crisis.html

Six elements of a crisis communication plan

Char Restaurant and Bar Crisis Communication Plan (PDF on Blackboard)
-- Review pages 1-29; read pages 30-37;

14 Tips for Building Your Social Media Crisis Communications Plan