

Communication 318 (WI): Public Relations Writing
Spring 2015
Course Syllabus

M, W and F, 10:25-11:15 a.m.
Corboy 710

Instructor

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Office Hours: M, W and F, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., or by appointment

Being a clear, versatile and persuasive writer not only prepares students for careers in public relations; it will also help them succeed at whatever they do in their professional lives.

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.

Prerequisite

COMM 210 Public Relations

Required Texts

1. Wilcox, D. L., and Reber, B. H. *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques* (7th ed.). Pearson. ISBN: 0-205-21167-4.
2. *Associated Press Stylebook*, 2014 edition, ISBN 978-0-917360-58-9; print edition, online subscription and mobile app available for purchase through <https://www.apstylebook.com/>

Additional Assigned Readings

Additional required course readings will be available on Sakai and/or handed out in class.

Course Website

Slide lectures will be posted in advance on Sakai. This is designed to enable students to avoid having to take extensive notes in class and as an aid for studying for exams; it is not meant as a substitute for class attendance.

Expectations

Students are expected to be prepared for, attend, and participate actively in all class sessions. Class will begin promptly at 10:25 a.m. and students who arrive after attendance has been taken will be marked absent. Please inform me in advance if you believe you have a legitimate reason for an absence.

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:

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	50 points
12. 30-second PSA	30 points
13. Blog post	30 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 person, 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 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. E-mail copies cannot be accepted without advance permission from the instructor. Since public relations practitioners are held to deadlines, late assignments will be graded down one full grade per day. For example, an assignment that would have received an A if it been turned in on time would receive a B+ if it was received between the class meeting time and midnight on the date due, a B if it was turned in on the following day, a C if it was turned in two days late, etc. No make-up assignments will be available.

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)

Exams

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. There will be no midterm or final.

Course Grading

Assignments	65 percent of grade
<i>AP Stylebook</i> quizzes (4)	25 percent of grade
Class participation	10 percent of grade

Academic Integrity

Each student is expected to do his or her own work in the course. Allegations of academic misconduct will be forwarded immediately to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication for possible disciplinary action. Loyola regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter with consequences ranging from failure of the course to probation to expulsion.

Academic misconduct includes:

- Cheating on exams or aiding other students to cheat. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful.
- Stealing the intellectual property of others and passing it off as your own work (this includes material found on the Internet). Software will be used to identify plagiarism.
- Failing to quote directly if you use someone else's words, and cite that particular work and author. If you paraphrase the ideas of another, credit the source with your citation. Please ask me if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism and/or how to cite sources.
- For quizzes, academic misconduct includes conferring with other class members, copying or reading someone else's test, and using notes and materials without prior permission of the instructor.
- Turning in the same work for two classes.

Classroom Behavior

To help create a positive learning community, turn off all phones and keep them in your bag, backpack, or pocket. Laptops or tablets should be used only for taking notes. Be respectful of fellow students and be in your seat when class begins.

Accommodations

Any student with a learning disability who needs accommodation during class sessions or exams should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities to the instructor during the first week of class; this information will be treated in complete confidence. The instructor will accommodate students' needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the responsibility of each student to plan in advance to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Students are excused for recognized religious holidays. Please let me know in advance.

Course Schedule

(Reading assignments are to be completed before class on the date shown)

Week 1

Jan. 12

Introductions and Course Overview

Jan. 14

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 Wed. Jan. 21 and be prepared to discuss its objectives and audiences and why you think it is persuasive or not.

Jan. 16

Becoming a Persuasive Writer

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 2

Dillon, "What Corporate America Cannot Build: A Sentence"

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

Assignment 2: Ch. 2, p. 57 – problem 1, 2, 3 or 4 (due Fri. Jan. 23)

Week 2

Jan. 19

No class

Jan. 21

Finding and Making News

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 3

Assignment 1 due

Assignment 3: Ch. 3, p. 85: problem 1, 2, 4 or 5 (due Wed. Jan. 28)

Jan. 23

Working with Journalists and Bloggers

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 4

Assignment 2 due

Assignment 4: Ch. 4, p. 115: problem 1, 2, 3 or 5 (due Fri. Jan. 30)

Week 3

Jan. 26

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.

Jan. 28

Pitches and Pitching

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 6, pp. 154-163 only

Strong, "Five Creative PR Pitches That Caught Reporters' Attention"

Assignment 3 due

Jan. 30

In-class writing and editing on social media pitch

Assignment 4 due

Assignment 5: Social media pitch (due Fri. Feb. 6)

Week 4

Feb. 2

Writing News Releases and Media Statements

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 5

Brockaway, "Four Ways to Improve Quotes in Press Releases"

Kennedy, "Six AP Style Rules for News Releases"

Assignment 6: News release (first draft due Mon. Feb. 9; final draft due Wed. Feb. 18)

Feb. 4

In-class writing and editing on news release

Feb. 6

In-class writing and editing on news release

Assignment 5 due

Week 5

Feb. 9

Fact Sheets, Media Advisories and Media Kits

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 6 (except pp. 154-163)

Assignment 6 first draft due

Feb. 11

In-class writing and editing on fact sheet

Assignment 7: Fact sheet (first draft due Wed. Feb. 18; final draft due Fri. Feb. 27)

Feb. 13

In-class writing and editing on fact sheet

Week 6

Feb. 16

In-class writing and editing on media advisory

Assignment 8: Media advisory (first draft due Mon. Feb. 23; final draft due Mon. March 9)

Feb. 18

In-class writing and editing on media advisory

Assignment 6 final draft due

Assignment 7 first draft due

Feb. 20

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 7Feb. 23*News Features and Op-Eds*

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 7

Assignment 8 first draft due

Feb. 25

In-class writing and editing on feature news release

Assignment 9: Feature news release (first draft due Mon. March 9; final draft due Wed. March 18)Feb. 27

In-class writing and editing on feature news release

Assignment 7 final draft due

Week 8

No class – spring break

Week 9March 9

In-class writing and editing on op-ed

Assignment 10: Op-ed (first draft due Mon. March 16; final draft due Wed. March 25)

Assignment 8 final draft due

Assignment 9 first draft due

March 11

In-class writing and editing on op-ed

March 13*Radio, Television and Online Video*

Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 9

Week 10March 16

In-class writing and editing on audio news release

Assignment 11: Audio news release (due Mon. March 23)

Assignment 10 first draft due

March 18*Satellite Media Tours and Radio Media Tours*

Assignment 9 final draft due

March 20*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-.

Week 11March 23

In-class writing and editing on PSA
Assignment 12: 30-second PSA (due Mon. March 30)
Assignment 11 due

March 25

Avoiding Legal Hassles
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 11
Assignment 10 final draft due

March 27

Tapping the Web and Digital Media
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 12
Luke, "Nine Writing Tips to Supercharge Your Blog"

Week 12March 30

In-class writing and editing on blog post
Assignment 13: Blog post (due Wed. April 8)
Assignment 12 due

April 1

Newsletters, Brochures and Intranets
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 13

April 3

In-class writing and editing on newsletter article
Assignment 14: Newsletter article (due Mon. April 13)

Week 13April 6

No class

April 8

Email, Memos and Proposals
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 14
Assignment 13 due

April 10

In-class writing and editing on memo
Assignment 15: Memo (due Fri. April 17)

Week 14April 13

Speeches and Presentations
Reading: Wilcox & Reber, Ch. 15
Wilson, "Five Types of Evidence Essential for Persuasive Speeches"
Assignment 14 due

April 15

In-class writing and editing on speech
Assignment 16: Speech (due Wed. April 22)

April 17

In-class writing and editing on speech
Assignment 15 due

Week 15

April 20

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

April 22

Speech presentations
Assignment 16 due

April 24

Speech presentations