

**COMM 318-20W Public Relations Writing
Loyola University Spring 2020 – SOC 003**

Instructor: Debra Bethard-Caplick, MS, MBA, APR

Office Location: Lewis Towers 900

Office hours: Wednesdays, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm or by appointment.

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I usually respond the same day. However, if it is urgent, or you do not hear from me within an hour, text me to let me know you've sent an email. Include your full name in the text, so I know to whom I'm responding.

Course meetings: Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays 1:40 pm – 2:30 pm, School of Communication, Room 003 (Water Tower Campus)

Course dates: Jan. 13 – May 02, 2020

Course units: 3

Required texts: Textbooks are available through the Loyola bookstore.

ebook: Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques, 8th ed., Dennis Wilcox & Bryan Reber
ISBN: 9780134010465

The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law 2019 ISBN: ISBN: 9780917360688.
Publisher: Associated Press, 2019

The AP Stylebook is the definitive style manual for the journalism and public relations professions, and is the standard that will be used to grade your assignments.

Also required: Links to additional readings from current events and lecture notes will be posted in **Sakai**

Course prerequisites: COMM 100 & 210 or Digital Media & Storytelling graduate students (DMST) or MS in Global Strategic Communication (GSC)

Course overview:

COMM 318 is a **writing intensive** fundamental applied skills course that focuses on PR strategies and writing for the public across a variety of media platforms, including print, broadcast and digital with an understanding of objectives, news values and formats. This course will cover writing skills in the context of current issues relevant to the field. Public relations professionals must master various writing styles used in business and journalism, including direct and indirect persuasion, objective journalistic-style writing, social media and formal business writing.

Students develop competency writing and editing news releases, pitch letters, fact sheets, public service announcements, newsletters, and Web content to develop an individualized portfolio. You will practice the nuances of writing for each communication method, incorporating organization, style, format and content in all variations of public relations writing.

Basic Expectations:

Students are expected to have already mastered the basic elements of good writing: spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence construction, composition and proofreading. **Errors in these areas will significantly hurt your future career.** Don't be surprised or discouraged if your first few assignments are heavily edited; it

is important to learn the basics before you move on to major projects. However, repeating the same errors without improvement will negatively impact your grades. I am available outside of class to help you improve your writing or to help you find resources for additional assistance.

Students Joining Course After the First Week

Students who add this class late and attend their first class after the first week must meet with me briefly in order to be fully briefed on the semester's projects. Meetings should take no more than 15 minutes.

Student Accommodations:

Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Students will provide professors with an accommodation notification from SAC, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. Please note that in this class, software may be used to record class lectures in order to provide equal access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester. For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or SAC@luc.edu.

Course learning objectives:

The academic assignments you will complete during this course are designed to meet course objectives set by the department and prepare you to excel in your profession. Specifically, you will:

- Understand the role of writing in the public relations discipline.
- Understand and master the different tools required for each of the involved communication disciplines and be able to choose the appropriate format for the situation.
- Strengthen writing skills and apply these skills to the public relations discipline.
- Understand the various elements of the writing process, including concept development, preparation, style and “voice,” writing and editing/proofreading.
- Master specific forms and styles of public relations writing required in the public relations and marketing professions and how to choose the appropriate format for a given situation.
- Incorporate appropriate theories of persuasive communication and strategy into communications materials and messages to target appropriate audiences.
- Develop concrete writing samples for your portfolio.

Methodology:

This class will consist of lectures and some online discussions to examine current practices in public relations and how they are evolving to adapt to society, in-class writing activities and small group projects for a real client. The small group work will require some work outside of class, either meeting in person or using online meeting resources. Each class comes with different learning needs. This syllabus will be adjusted to accommodate those specific needs, to allow for periodic guest speakers, plus for discussions of current events involving public relations. Changes will be announced in class, but it will be YOUR responsibility to keep up with syllabus schedule changes, including assignment due dates. Reading assignments will be both from the textbook and other sources. Links to online sources are in the syllabus.

Assignments:

The following short exercises and assignments will be required for this course. Detailed instructions and specific rubrics will be posted in Sakai and included in class discussions. Several of these will be written during the class period, to allow the instructor to critique and assist in the first draft as needed before being submitted for grading. Revisions will be done outside of class and then submitted for grading a second time. These dates are also listed in the course schedule at the end of this syllabus.

Assignment	Point Value	Due Date
Account Team Work Plan	5	Jan. 19
AP Stylebook Exercise	20	Jan. 26
Online Discussions Week 2 5 pts daily @ 5 pts. ea.	25	Daily, Jan. 20-24
Client Situation Analysis First Draft	20	Feb. 2
Client Situation Analysis Revised	30	Feb. 16
GOSTT First Draft	15	In class exercise
GOSTT Revision	25	Feb. 23
Target Media List	10	Mar. 8
News Release/Media Advisory Assignment First Draft	15	In class exercise
News Release/Media Advisory Assignment Revised	25	Mar. 15
Feature profile Concept Outline	10	In class exercise
Feature profile First Draft	20	Mar 9.
Feature profile Second Draft	20	Apr. 5
Feature profile Final Version	25	Apr. 19
PSAs First Draft	15	In class exercise
PSAs Revised	25	Mar. 7
Pitching Exercise First Draft	15	In class exercise
Pitching Exercise Revised	25	Feb. 23
Blog Post Exercise First Draft	15	In class exercise
Blog Post Exercise Revised	25	Mar.22
Social Media Posts First Draft	15	In class exercise
Social Media Posts Revised	25	Mar 29
Fact sheet/Infographic	15	In class exercise
Fact sheet/Infographic Revised	25	Apr. 5
Fundraising Letter First Draft	15	In class exercise
Fundraising Letter Revised	25	April 12
Final Project Draft 1	25	Mar 29
Final Project Draft 2	25	Apr. 19
Final Project Presentation	50	TBD
Final Project Paper	75	Apr. 30
Midterm Exam	50	April TBD
Extra Credit Opportunities 5 @ 5 pts. ea.	25	Apr. 27

Deadlines Whether it’s journalism or PR, this is a professional business of deadlines, measured in air time, column inches, ad space and mentions. Now is when you learn to write like a professional, therefore timely homework completion is important—even if you are absent. All take-home assignments are due electronically

in Sakai **by the end of the day** on the designated date. It is sometimes necessary to adjust the course schedule later, depending on how well the class grasps the concepts under discussion. Due dates will NEVER be moved up. Follow the Assignments Schedule for all due dates.

Late Submissions:

It is critical that you treat this course with professionalism. Do not fall behind in the coursework. Late work will be marked down five points for each **DAY** past the deadline it is submitted. **Assignments and exercises not submitted within seven days of the due date will result in an automatic grade of zero for that submission.** In extreme situations, life does happen (hospitalization, family emergency such as death of a relative, car accident, etc.); in such an event, contact me and if possible, arrange for an extension ahead of time. Show your conscientiousness and integrity by communicating in advance, and we'll try to make appropriate and fair accommodations. Situations where advance communication is not possible will be dealt with at the discretion of the instructor on a case-by-case basis, within university guidelines.

Assignment Requirements:

All assignments **must** include your last name and the assignment/exercise name in the filename and be submitted as a **Microsoft Word file via Sakai submission folders.** Follow the syllabus for all due dates. Because I insert comments directly into your submission using the comments option, **ABSOLUTELY NO Google Docs, shared links, PDF, PowerPoint or ODT files will be accepted. Assignments submitted incorrectly will not be graded and a score of zero will be assigned.**

SAVE ALL ASSIGNMENTS IN MICROSOFT WORD AS FOLLOWS:

Last Name [assignment name].docx For example: Bethard News Release.docx

Grading:

Grades for this course will be determined by the assigned points for each grade item, out of a minimum total of 755 points possible. The grading scale used for this course is as follows:

Grades	Percentage
A	90-100%
A-	90-92.99%
B+	87-89.99%
B	83-86.99%
B-	80-82.99%
C+	77-79.99%
C	73-76.99%
C-	70-72.99%
D	60-69%
F	Under 60%

Assignments submitted in this class should reflect collegiate level writing skills and standards, both in form and content. You are expected to meet the following standards:

A- to A 90 – 100%

To earn a grade in this range, work must be free from grammar and punctuation errors. It should adhere to the assignment requirements and format as spelled out in the written instructions. The content must be clear and well organized. It should demonstrate a clear understanding of the course content and contain original material. It should be creative and approach professional-level quality.

B- to B+ - 80 – 89%

A grade in this range reflects work mostly free from grammar and punctuation errors. The writing will be mostly clear, with no more than one or two issues in organization or content. It should demonstrate an above-average understanding of the course material and a good level of creativity.

C- to C+ - 70 – 79%

Work meets all major assignment requirements. Writing will be generally acceptable, but with minor problems with content, grammar, punctuation or formatting. A grade in this range means that only an average understanding of the material is demonstrated. A lack of creativity will also be apparent.

D- to D+ - 60 – 69%

Work in this range shows serious deficiencies by failing to meet some or most assignment requirements. Writing may have significant errors in grammar, punctuation, formatting or organization. Thoughts are poorly expressed, or creativity could be lacking.

F 59% and below

This grade will be assigned for work that fails to meet most or all of the assignment requirements or is simply not submitted by the deadline. Submission will be poorly written, with multiple errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, formatting and organization. Sections of the assignment may be missing. The assignment demonstrates a lack of understanding of the material. This grade will also be assigned for any plagiarized submission.

Extra credit:

Throughout the semester, we will be analyzing real world examples in class that illustrate a public relations example or trending professional issue. You are strongly encouraged to submit examples of your own for discussion. Each relevant media relations example you submit will be worth 5 extra points toward the final grade (maximum of five items – 25 points maximum). Be prepared to discuss in class your reasons for choosing your example, and how it relates to the course material. Additional extra credit opportunities may arise, based on current events. Keep in mind, however, that extra credit is not a solution to those who find themselves in a grade crisis late in the quarter.

Plagiarism: 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. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments.

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;
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.

- 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.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in 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.

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 https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml .

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 Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction.

The Associate and Assistant Deans 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.

Managing Life Crises and Finding Support:

Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (LUC.edu/csaa) for yourself or a peer in need of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf – please email me or schedule a meeting with me. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites at LUC.edu/dos or LUC.edu/csaa. Or you may contact them directly at 773-508-8840 and at deanofstudents@luc.edu.

Attendance and Participation:

You will be expected to participate in class discussions and exercises, most of which cannot be replicated out of class. An unexcused absence on the scheduled day of your client presentation will earn a zero score on your presentation. ***More than one unexcused class will reduce your score by one full letter grade.*** At the beginning of each session, sign in on the attendance sheet provided to verify your presence. ***If you must miss a class, you must notify me by email within 24 hours of your absence (in advance if possible)*** – just as you would call in sick to work. Make up work is not accepted except for an excused absence or unforeseen emergency.

Civility and Professionalism:

COMM 318 is designed to be an interactive forum for open discussion, idea sharing, learning, and productivity. Creating the environment for the free flow of ideas requires respect, tolerance, courtesy, open-mindedness, positive thinking, professional manners, and overall good citizenship. Any type of behavior — including (but not limited to) sexual harassment, degrading comments, derogatory racial remarks, bullying, profanity or other forms of disrespect or intimidation and harassment — that undermines this forum will not be tolerated.

In-class Behavior:

Repeated tardiness is disruptive to the class and makes it difficult to cover all the of material scheduled. If there is a problem with your ability to arrive at class on time, please discuss it with me. Repeated tardiness (more than three instances) during the semester will result in a penalty of two points per incident deducted from your final grade.

If you have any questions about these expectations, please speak to me privately before or after class.

Electronic devices:

As a matter of simple courtesy to your fellow students and the instructor, cell phones MUST BE turned off or in airplane mode during class and off the desktop. Accessing the Internet during class is intended for class purposes only. Browsing social media sites, texting friends or other non-course related activities will result in the banning of all cellphones and Internet usage in class and the possible loss of points. Bonus: email me by midnight on Friday, January 31st, that you've read this, and receive five bonus points. Do not tell anyone else in the class about this. I am running a small test to see who actually reads the syllabus.

Course Schedule and Due Dates
(subject to change depending on class progress):

WEEK 1 – Jan 13 - 17: Welcome to Public Relations Writing: The Basics & Class Introductions

Readings

Chapter 1.1 The Framework of Public Relations Writing	The Rise of Storytelling as the New Marketing
1.4 Professional Publications and Other Resources	
Chapter 2 Becoming a Persuasive Writer	

Activity: Proofreading exercise

Items Due: Account teams work plan completed in class with forms **due Sunday, Jan. 19th**

WEEK 2 – Jan. 20 - 24: Building the Foundation – Before Writing Your Campaign Plan

NOTE: This Week Class Does Not Meet in Person – Activities Are All Online

Readings

Chapter 2 Becoming a Persuasive Writer	Modes of Persuasion (Bethard-Caplick)
Chapter 1.2 The Public Relations Writer	8 Crucial Questions Every PR Pro Needs to Ask Their Client Before Getting Started
1.5 Research as a Prelude to Writing	Analyzing Your Situation (Bethard-Caplick)
Chapter 18 Planning Programs and Campaigns	Fly Fishing Targets Women as a Source for Growth – New York Times
Chapter 19 Measuring Success	Women Are the Fastest Growing Demographic in Fly Fishing – Story Placement Example

Note: Class discussions in the online forums will be checked and points for participation will be awarded for each day substantive posts are made. Minimum of three days participation, answers to each initial question posted by the instructor and three substantive responses to classmates’ posts required. Non-substantive posts such as “Nice idea,” “I agree.” etc., do not qualify as “substantive” comments and will not earn points.

Activity: Word choice selection

Items Due: AP Stylebook Exercise **due Sunday, Jan. 26**

Items Due: Situation analysis first draft **due Sunday, Feb. 2; Revisions due Sunday, Feb. 16**

WEEK 3 – Jan. 27 – Feb. 1: Strategic Writing: Campaign Plans & Proposals

Readings

Chapter 1.2 The Public Relations Writer	PR Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Tactics (Bethard-Caplick)
Chapter 1.5 Research as a Prelude to Writing	Guidelines for Setting Measurable Public Relations Objectives: An Update – Institute for Public Relations
Chapter 18 Planning Programs and Campaigns	Elements of a PR Plan - Eventory
Chapter 19 Measuring Success	

Monday: Client Meeting, Leukemia Research Foundation Director of Communications Carl Alston

Activity: Setting your objectives & key messages

WEEK 4 – Feb. 3 - 7: Message Strategy & Writing for the Media: Identifying & Crating Newsworthy Stories

Readings

Chapter 3 Finding and Making News	What Makes a Good Story - American Press Institute
Chapter 4 Working with Journalists and Bloggers	LaRussa Interview – ESPN
Chapter 7.1 The Value of Features	
Chapter 7.2 Types of Features	
7.3 Planning a Feature	
7.4 The Parts of a Feature	
Chapter 12.2 The Balancing Act of Editors	
12.5 The Value of Print Publications	
12.6 Print Newsletters and Magazines	

Activity: Developing key messages

Activity: Brainstorming story angles

Activity: Developing story information & preparing interview questions

Exercise: GOSTT first draft *due in class; revisions due Sunday, Feb. 23*

Items Due: Final project first draft *due Sunday, Mar. 29; revision due Apr. 19*

WEEK 5 – Feb. 10 - 14: Getting the Word Out: Writing for the Media

Readings

Chapter 5 Writing the News Release	How I Lost My 25-year Battle Against Corporate Claptrap – Financial Times
Chapter 6.1 Expanding the Publicity Toolkit	
6.2 Fact sheets	
6.3 Media Advisories	
Chapter 7.5 Placement Opportunities	

Activity: Identifying what is news/inverted pyramid writing

Activity: Thinking through headlines

Items Due: Targeted media pitching list *due Sunday, Mar. 8*

WEEK 6 – Feb. 17 - 21: Pitching: The Role of Persuasion in Media Relations

Readings

Chapter 6.5 Pitching a Story	5 Public Relations Tips to Help You Write a Pitch Someone Will Actually Read – Entrepreneur.com
Chapter 7.5 Placement Opportunities	Bad Pitch Blog Review

Activity: Developing your pitch strategy.

Activity: Pitching practice

Exercise: Pitch email *due in class; revision due Sunday, Feb. 23*

Items Due: News release first draft *due Sunday, Feb. 23; revision due Sunday, Mar. 15*

Items Due: Feature story idea outline *due in class; first draft due Sunday, Mar. 9; revision due Sunday Apr. 5, final due Apr. 19*

WEEK 7 – Feb. 24 - 29: The Eyes & Ears Have It: Radio, TV & Online Video

Readings

Chapter 9 Radio, TV & Online Video

Exercise Items Due: PSAs first draft *due in class; revision due Sunday, Mar. 7*

WEEK 8 – Mar. 2 - 6: Spring Break – University Closed

WEEK 9 – Mar. 9 - 13: Writing for Online Media

Readings

Chapter 10 Website, Blogs and Podcasts

[Being a Better Online Reader](#) -The New Yorker
[Lazy Eyes](#) – Slate.com

Items Due: Blog post first draft *due in class; revision due Sunday, Mar. 22*

WEEK 10 – Mar 16 – 20: Strategically Social

Readings

Chapter 11 Social Media and Mobile Apps

[Native Advertising: A Guide for Businesses](#) –
Federal Trade Commission
[Marketo Sample Social Media Tactical Plan](#) –
Marketo
[Marketo Sample Social Media Calendar](#) - Marketo

Items Due: Social media posts first draft *due in class; revision due Sunday, Mar. 29*

WEEK 11 – Mar. 23 - 27: Using Supporting Actors: Photos, Infographics, Brochures & Media Kits

Readings

Chapter 12.7 Brochures
Chapter 8 Publicity Photos and Infographics
Chapter 4.6 News Conferences
4.7 Media Tours and Other Events

Exercise: Fact sheet first draft *due in class; revision due Sunday, Apr. 5*

WEEK 12 – Mar. 30 – Apr. 3: Specialize Writing Topics

Readings

Chapter 13 Writing Email, Memos and Proposals
Chapter 16 Using Direct Mail and Advertising

Exercise: Fundraising letter first draft *due in class; revision due Sunday, Apr. 12*

WEEK 13 – Apr. 6 - 10: Crisis Communications: Media Relations on the Edges

Readings

Chapter 7.6 Writing Opinion Pieces

[John Mackey – The Whole Foods Alternative to Obamacare \(Wall Street Journal\)](#)

Chapter 4.5 Media Spokesperson Responsibilities

Chapter 4.8 Crisis Communications

Chapter 17 Working Within a Legal Framework

WEEK 14 – Apr. 13 - 17: Promoting People: Speeches and Presentations

Readings

Chapter 14 Giving Speeches and Presentations

WEEK 15 – Apr. 20 - 24: Wrapping it Up – Presentations to the Client

Final Exam Schedule: Thursday, April 30, 1 pm – 3 pm: Account team final projects and individual final submissions due in submission folders between 1 pm – 3 pm.

Submissions outside of those hours will NOT be accepted.