

Writing for Public Relations
COM 384 Section J
Monday/Wednesday 4:00-5:50
CC 108
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Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Description

- 4 credit hours.
- Techniques for creating effective written public relations communications to achieve organizational goals.
- Exercises based on case study scenarios.

Course Goals

This course will enable students to apply concepts from the theoretical foundation of message creation to the practice of writing effective public relations communications. Students in this course will learn how to produce the various forms of public relations writing. Attention will be given to the importance of strategic message planning. This course also has a strong focus on social media.

Course Grade

Total your points from all course requirements. See the table below to determine your final grade for the course. No rounding.

A – 100-95	BC – 84-80	D – 70 – 65
AB – 94-90	C – 79 – 75	DF – 64-60
B – 89-85	CD – 74 – 70	F – 59-0

Textbooks & other supplies

Bivins, Thomas H. (2011). *Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format* (8th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

AP Stylebook (recent, from at least 2015)

Assignment Breakdown

Written assignments - Your writing assignments are an important component of this class. All assignments must be typed. You will be graded on grammar, punctuation,	60%
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concise use of language, and your ability to address the assignment effectively.	
Discussion boards - It is your responsibility to respond to the discussion boards in a timely manner.	5%
Quizzes – Quizzes will be given throughout the semester and will cover the current and previous topics in class.	10%
Portfolio	5%
Participation – I expect you to participate in class activities, do the assigned homework, participate in class discussions, and attend class. <u>Surfing the Web during class will affect your participation grade.</u> This portion of your grade covers the in-class assignments	20%

Course Objectives

Primary objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Have increased proficiency with AP Style
- Have an increased understanding of grammar, punctuation, and the rules of the English language.
- Have an increased understanding of written tools available to public relations practitioners.

Additional objectives

- Understand the **concepts and theory** behind effective public relations communications
- **Write correctly and clearly** in forms and styles appropriate for public relations and the audiences and purposes we serve
- Critically evaluate your own work and that of others for **accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness**
- Learn how the **tools and technologies** of social media are being used to enhance the practice of public relations
- Learn how to gain the attention of the media to receive coverage of a message
- Understand and apply the principles and laws of **freedom of speech and press** in the United States
- Demonstrate an understanding of **professional ethical principles and work ethically** in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- Demonstrate an understanding of **gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and other forms of diversity** in relation to mass communications
- Think **critically, creatively and independently**

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Classroom and Course Policies

Surfing and Texting

Surfing the Web, sending emails, taking phone calls, texting, or otherwise communicating with the outside world during class is not acceptable behavior unless permission is given by the instructor. Phones must not be touched during class and are to remain in your bag/backpack. Laptops are a distraction to other students and may not be used in class. Any student doing any of the above behaviors or any other outside activities may be asked to leave the class and will be counted absent for that day.

Attendance

I expect students to attend class faithfully, arrive on time, and stay for the entire class. I will take attendance during every class meeting. If you are 1-20 minutes late, you will be counted as tardy. If you are more than 20 minutes late, you will be counted absent.

Similarly, if you leave before the end of class, you will be counted absent if you leave before the last 20 minutes of class or counted as “leaving early” if you leave 1-20 minutes before the end of class. Three tardies and/or “leaving early” will equal one absence. I would expect that you would discuss with me the reason you would be leaving early from class. Students who have more than **two** unexcused absences will receive a 1/3 letter grade deduction for every additional absence over two.

Excused—MUST PROVIDE PAPER DOCUMENTATION	NOT Excused
Observance of religious holidays	Doctor’s appt/dentist apt
Funeral of an immediate family member	Parking problems/Car troubles
University-sponsored activities in which you are participating (i.e., sports, academic conference)	Work commitments
Disability-related issues	Personal travel
Your own hospitalization or illness where a doctor has indicated you cannot attend class	Interviews
Jury duty (after seeking postponement)	Adviser appointments
	Many other reasons

To have an absence classified as excused, you must submit a written request with documentation in advance for scheduled absences or within a week of your return to class for emergencies. If a student has an excessive number of absences (whether excused or unexcused), the student may be advised to drop the class.

Make-ups for Tests, Presentations and Late Assignments

If you provide advance notice that you will be missing class on the day of a test (or notice as soon as possible if you are physically unable to provide advance notice), I will determine whether a makeup test is warranted. The test may be taken up to three business days before the day it is given in class or within three business days after it being given in class.

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Assignments will be accepted late with a 10 percent grade penalty for the first 24 hours and a 20 percent reduction for 24-48 hours late. No late assignments will be accepted after 48 hours.

Any activities done in class that count toward your participation grade cannot be made up for any reason. Homework assignments are not accepted late.

Team Projects

If problems arise among team members, I am available to help deal with the conflict. I expect all members of a team to contribute equally and if one member is not contributing, I need to be notified. The team member may have to complete the project individually or with other students in the same situation (see makeup presentation date). Peer evaluations will be used to measure each team member's contribution and students who do not carry their weight will receive a deduction from several points to a grade of 0, depending on the level of effort.

Office Hours

TBA

Student Handbook

Students at The University of Tampa are held responsible for knowledge of the University rules and regulations as stated in this student handbook), as well as the University catalog and any rules and regulations which may be posted from time to time. Ignorance of the University's rules and regulations will not be considered an excuse for violation.

To access the full Student Handbook, go to <http://www.ut.edu/studenthandbook/>.

To view the Student Rights and Responsibilities Code of Conduct, go to <http://www.ut.edu/rightsandresponsibilities/>.

Saunders Writing Center

For a free face-to-face tutoring session, experienced writing tutors are available in the writing center to assist you in all aspects of your writing. This service is available to all UT students, not just students who are having problems. Take full advantage of this service available to you in the writing center, 323 Plant Hall (phone: 813- 253-6244). You can drop in, call or go by in person to make an appointment.

Classroom Disruption Policy

Every student has the right to a comfortable learning environment where the open and honest exchange of ideas may freely occur. Each student is expected to do his or her part to ensure that the classroom (and anywhere else the class may meet) remains conducive to learning. This includes respectful and courteous treatment of all in the classroom. According to the terms of the University of Tampa Disruption Policy, the professor will take immediate action when inappropriate behavior occurs.

Academic Honesty and Integrity

Cheating, plagiarism, copying and any other behavior that is contrary to University standards of behavior will not be tolerated.

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Students caught violating any aspect of the University of Tampa's Academic Integrity Policy will be penalized in all cases. Penalty ranges from "0" on an assignment to "F" for the course without regard to a student's accumulated points. Students may also face expulsion. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the policies of the university regarding academic integrity and to avoid violating such policies. Policy information is found at:

<http://ut.smartcatalogiq.com/en/current/catalog/Academic-Policies-and-Procedures/Academic-Integrity-Policy>

Definitions of Academic Integrity Violations and Academic Misconduct

- Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized assistance, information, or study aids in an academic exercise.
- Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when a person represents someone else's words, ideas, phrases, sentences, or data as one's own work. When submitting work that includes someone else's words, ideas, syntax, data or organizational patterns, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate and specific references.
- Fabrication: Fabrication refers to the deliberate use of invented information or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive.
- Academic Misconduct: Academic misconduct includes the alteration of grades; involvement in the acquisition or distribution of tests, the unauthorized submission of student work in more than one class, unauthorized collaboration, and other activities not otherwise identified previously.

Violation of academic integrity and academic misconduct tarnish the reputation of the University and discredit the accomplishments of past and present students. Sanctions for violations may include a failing grade on the assignment or the entire course or suspension or expulsion from the University.

See the full Academic Integrity Policy online for details, examples and sanction process. Students are responsible for understanding and observing this policy.

<http://www.ut.edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Provost/UT-AcademicIntegrityPolicies.pdf>

Adverse Conditions and Emergency Situations

In case of any adverse condition or situation which could interrupt the schedule of classes, each student is asked to access www.ut.edu for information about the status of the campus and class meetings. In addition, please refer to ut.blackboard.edu for announcements and other important information. You are responsible for accessing this information.

Reporting Sexual Violence/ Title IX Matters

Sexual violence includes nonconsensual sexual contact and nonconsensual sexual intercourse (which is any type of sexual contact without your explicit consent, including rape), dating violence, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, and stalking. You may reach out for confidential help (see contact info below) or report an incident for investigation.

If you choose to write or speak about an incident of sexual violence and disclose that this violence occurred while you were a UT student, the instructor is obligated to report the incident

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to the Title IX Deputy Coordinator for Students. The purpose of this report is to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students. The Deputy Coordinator or his or her designee will contact you to let you know about the resources, accommodations, and support services at UT and possibilities for holding the perpetrator accountable. If you do not want the Title IX Coordinator notified, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, you can speak confidentially with the individuals listed below. They can connect you with support services and discuss options for holding the perpetrator accountable.

There is an exception to this required reporting for preventative education programs and public awareness events or forums. While the instructor is not required to report disclosures during these instances, unless you make or initiate a complaint, during these programs or events, the instructor or another University official will ensure that the students are aware of the available resources at UT, such as counseling, health, and mental health services, and it will provide information about Title IX, how to file a Title IX complaint, how to make a confidential report, and the procedure for reporting sexual violence.

For more information, see The University of Tampa's Title IX resources at <http://www.ut.edu/uploadedFiles/Academics/Provost/Title%20IX.pdf> and <https://www.ut.edu/studentconduct/titleix/>.

To make a confidential report of sexual violence, please contact:

- The Victim's Advocacy Hotline: (813) 257-3900
- Dickey Health & Wellness Center (wellness@ut.edu) 813.257.1877
- Health and Counseling Center (healthcenter@ut.edu) 813.253.6250

Students with Disabilities

If there is a student who requires accommodations because of any disability, please go to the Academic Success Center in North Walker Hall for information regarding registering as a student with a disability. You may also call (813) 257-5757 or email disability.services@ut.edu. Please feel free to discuss this issue with me, in private, if you need more information.

Religious Preference Absence Policy

Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to a major religious observance must provide advance written notice of the date(s) so arrangements can be made to make up work or modify deadlines for assignments.

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Schedule

The schedule is always subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances or changes. It's up to you to keep up with any changes announced in class and on Blackboard. If there are any serious changes, I will do my best to inform you as far in advance as possible.

Date	Week	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Monday, August 28, 2017	1	Introductions	Syllabus	
Wednesday, August 30, 2017		Grammar and punctuation, AP Style and why it matters		Discussion board 1
Monday, September 4, 2017	2	NO CLASS		Discussion board 2
Wednesday, September 6, 2017		Editing, How to use MS Office's Editing Tools Commonly confused words and decision-making in writing		Discussion board 3
Monday, September 11, 2017	3	Sentence Structure	Chapter 1: Writing for Public Relations	Discussion board 4 Write a 2-page (double spaced) biography on yourself, written in 3rd person. Discuss your background, professional skills, hobbies, and goals for the future.
Wednesday, September 13, 2017		Document Structure, Research and planning		Discussion board 5

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Monday, September 18, 2017	4	Legal and Ethical Issues	Chapter 2	Due: 3rd Person Biography Recognizing Language Fallacies Recognizing Logic Fallacies Ghostwriting
Wednesday, September 20, 2017				Recognizing ethical issues in public relations Understanding legal issues in public relations Understanding legal issues in public relations All this week's assignments due on Friday, September 22
Monday, September 25, 2017	5	Planning and Research	Chapter 3	Developing an issue statement Preparing a direction sheet Conducting an interview for topic information
Wednesday, September 27, 2017				Conducting secondary research on your target audience Developing a questionnaire for target audience research Setting objectives All this week's assignments due on Friday, September 29
Monday, October 2, 2017	6	Choosing the right message and medium	Chapter 4	Setting message strategy Understanding cognitive dissonance
Wednesday, October 4, 2017				Persuading Elaboration likelihood model Choosing the right medium All this week's assignments due on Friday, October 6
Monday, October 9, 2017	7	Media relations and placement	Chapter 5	Judging newsworthiness Making contact with the media
Wednesday, October 11, 2017				Compiling media lists Compiling a media kit Online newsroom All this week's assignments due on Friday, October 13

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Monday, October 16, 2017	8	Writing for web and social media	Chapter 6	Finishing media list Due: Media list
Wednesday, October 18, 2017				Writing for a blog Developing a blog Writing for Twitter All this week's assignments due Friday, October 20
Monday, October 23, 2017	9	News releases and other materials	Chapter 7	Outlining a press release Writing leads Writing leads with a local angle Writing a news release
Wednesday, October 25, 2017				Writing a pitch letter and media advisory Writing a fact sheet All this week's assignments due Friday, October 27
Monday, October 30, 2017	10	Controlled publications	Chapter 8	Developing a newsletter audience profile Organizing a feature article Profile assignment Due: Press Release
Wednesday, November 1, 2017				Profile assignment All this week's assignments due Friday, November 3
Monday, November 6, 2017	11	Design, Printing, and Desktop Publishing	Chapter 9	Developing brochure copy Developing a flyer Due: Profile assignment
Wednesday, November 8, 2017				Recognizing good design Practicing good design Understanding the impact of typefaces Developing a flyer All this week's assignments due Friday, November 10
Monday, November 13, 2017	12	Television and Radio	Chapter 10	Writing a television treatment Creating a television spot Creating an as-recorded radio spot Due: Flyer
Wednesday, November 15, 2017				Television and radio spots Television and radio spots due Friday, November 17

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Monday, November 20, 2017	13	NO CLASS		Portfolio: Assemble three of your best written pieces from this class and clean them up. Polish them and convert them to PDF form. Write a three-paragraph explanation (one for each piece) explaining why you chose that piece and how it could help you get the kind of job you want if shown to potential employer.
Wednesday, November 22, 2017		NO CLASS		
Monday, November 27, 2017	14	Speeches and Presentations	Chapter 11	Speech assignment
Wednesday, November 29, 2017				Speech assignment
Monday, December 4, 2017	15	Speeches and presentations		Due (before class): The text of your speech
Wednesday, December 6, 2017				Speech presentations in-class Speech presentations in-class Due: Portfolio

Course Values

Integrity and honesty

From taking tests to your written assignments, all work must be your own.

Completeness and thoroughness

The best work will meet all the objectives and requirements of the assignment.

Preparedness

Complete reading assignments on time and be prepared to participate in class discussions. Turn assignments in on time.

Accuracy

Your facts must be accurate.

Professional courtesy

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Respect the opinions of others, work together in a spirit of cooperation, and treat your fellow classmates with courtesy. Avoid disruptive classroom behaviors, such as holding private conversations. Turn off all communication devices during class. Treat clients with respect and courtesy.

Grading procedure

Your assignments will be graded based on the following five qualities. Each quality will receive equal weighting.

1. **Perception:** Grading begins with an examination of whether the piece incorporates the most useful, accurate and interesting perception of the event or situation. This perception must be crystallized in the lead and then demonstrated throughout the rest of the story. I will ask myself, “Did the writer capture the essence of the event?”
2. **Clarity:** Next, the story must achieve clarity. Qualities that add to clarity are proper word choice, good organization, simplicity and active voice. Detracting factors are poor organization, complexity of presentation and use of passive voice. I will ask myself, “Is the writing easy to read, follow and understand?”
3. **Accuracy:** The story must represent an accurate view of the matters being discussed and all information presented must be accurate. I will ask myself, “Was the information presented in the story correct?”
4. **Completeness:** Your writing will be complete if you answer all the questions that could reasonably be expected by your audience and not leave out important details. I will ask myself, “Did the writer leave out any critical information that would answer remaining questions a reader might have?”
5. **Adherence to structure rules:** This includes using the proper format for quotes, writing one-sentence leads and writing short paragraphs.

In addition, students will receive deductions for spelling, grammar, punctuation and AP mistakes and for not following assignment guidelines (e.g., length).

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