

# Public Relations Writing

COMM 318 – Spring 2014  
Mondays 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.  
SOC 003

## INSTRUCTOR

Matt West

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Office location: Lewis Towers, Suite 900

Office hours: Mondays, 5:45-6:45 p.m.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- Wilcox, D.L. and Reber, B.H. *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Pearson. ISBN: 0-205-21167-4
- *Associated Press Stylebook, 2013 Edition*. ISBN: 978-0465082995

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Writing is the most fundamental skill in the public relations profession. A well-crafted public relations message can inform, shape opinions and attitudes, establish credibility, influence decision-makers, motivate behavior change and persuade audiences to take action.

In this advanced, writing intensive course, students will learn, develop and practice the professional-level writing skills required of today's public relations practitioners. The instructor will emphasize different approaches required for communicating with a variety of audiences. Students will develop competency writing and editing news releases, feature stories, pitches, fact sheets, newsletter articles and other materials that can be used to develop a portfolio of individual writing samples.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

During this course, students will:

1. Learn to write clear, concise and compelling public relations content
2. Practice correct grammar, punctuation and style principles
3. Learn to understand the importance of outlining, editing and proofreading
4. Develop a strong working knowledge of *Associated Press Stylebook* guidelines
5. Gain critical thinking and research skills

## 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

Public relations practitioners write for professional audiences. Students should aim to produce client ready, professional-quality work every time. All writing assignments will be graded against the following:

1. Successfully fulfilling the criteria outlined for each assignment
2. Adherence to *Associated Press Stylebook* guidelines
3. Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation
4. Writing style, including voice, tone and structure
5. Effectively writing for the intended audience(s) for each assignment

During the course of the semester, students will be given 12 assignments of various lengths and complexities. Following are the points for each assignment:

Assignment 1 – Example of public relations writing	30 points
Assignment 2 – Key messages	50 points
Assignment 3 – News release lead	50 points
Assignment 4 – Talking points	60 points
Assignment 5 – News release*	70 points
Assignment 6 – Fact sheet	60 points
Assignment 7 – Feature story*	70 points
Assignment 8 – Infographic creative brief	60 points
Assignment 9 – Video news release script	60 points
Assignment 10 – Blog post	60 points
Assignment 11 – Newsletter article*	70 points
Assignment 12 – Speech script	60 points

*\*Students will have an opportunity to edit and rewrite these three assignments after receiving feedback from the instructor and other students during in-class editing activities. Only the final drafts of these assignments will be graded.*

All writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified. Late assignments will be graded down one grade per day. For example, an assignment that would have received an “A” would receive a “B” if it is turned in on the following day and a “C” if it is turned in two days late.

Assignments are to be typed, stapled and turned in as hard-copy prints. Assignments should be in Times New Roman 12 pt. or Arial 11 pt., double-spaced, with one-inch margins. The student’s

name, date, assignment number and whether it is a first or final draft (if applicable) should be on the top left-hand corner of the first page.

### QUIZZES

Students will be given four quizzes during the semester based on *Associated Press Stylebook* guidelines and reading assignments from the textbook *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques*. Following are the topics and points for each quiz:

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|--|-----------|
| Quiz 1   | 50 points |
| Wilcox and Reber Chapters 1-4; <i>AP Stylebook</i> A-F with a special emphasis on abbreviations and acronyms, affect/effect, ampersand, a.m./p.m., capital/capitol, capitalization, city, collective nouns, company names, composition titles, dateline, dates, dollars, editing marks, email and fewer/less |           |
| Quiz 2   | 50 points |
| Wilcox and Reber Chapters 5-7; <i>AP Stylebook</i> G-L with a special emphasis on geographic names, governmental bodies, good/well, historical periods and events, half, House of Representatives, hyphen, in, island, it/it's, incorporated, lay/lie and legislative titles                                 |           |
| Quiz 3   | 50 points |
| Wilcox and Reber Chapters 8-9 and 12; <i>AP Stylebook</i> M-R with a special emphasis on magazine names, months, numerals, on, organizations and institutions, over, police department, part time/part-time, people/persons, percent, plurals, possessives and re-   |           |
| Quiz 4   | 50 points |
| Wilcox and Reber Chapters 13-15; <i>AP Stylebook</i> S-Z with a special emphasis on Senate, sentences, state, state names, television program titles, temperatures, that, times, titles, who/whom, Wi-Fi and years   |           |

### CLASS PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to be prepared for, attend and participate actively in all class sessions. Class will begin promptly at 7 p.m. Please inform the instructor in advance if you believe you have a legitimate reason for an absence. Information regarding writing assignments and quizzes will come from in-class lectures, exercises and discussions, not just the assigned reading assignments. Should a student miss a class for any reason, it will be that student's responsibility to contact another student—not the instructor—to obtain notes and find out what was covered.

### GRADING

The following grading scale will be used for all writing assignments, quizzes and final grades:

A	93-100 percent	C	73-76 percent
A-	90-92 percent	C-	70-72 percent
B+	87-89 percent	D+	67-69 percent
B	83-86 percent	D	63-66 percent
B-	80-82 percent	D-	60-62 percent
C+	77-79 percent	F	Below 60 percent

Each student's final grade will be determined based on the following:

Writing Assignments (12)	70 percent of grade
Quizzes (4)	20 percent of grade
Class Participation	10 percent of grade

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Any student with a learning disability who needs accommodation during class sessions 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 the course content. 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 the instructor know in advance.

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

#### **Session 1**

January 13

*Introductions, course overview and grammar fundamentals*

- Reading Assignment (due Jan. 27): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 1 and 2
- Writing Assignment (due Jan. 27): Assignment 1 – Example of public relations writing

**No class January 20, Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday**

#### **Session 2**

January 27

*Getting organized for writing, becoming a persuasive writer*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 1 and 2, Assignment 1
- Reading Assignment (due Feb. 3): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 3, Ch. 5 pages 123-128
- Writing Assignment (due Feb. 3): Assignment 2 – Key messages

#### **Session 3**

February 3

*Finding and making news, headlines and leads*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 3, Ch. 5 pages 123-128, Assignment 2
- Reading Assignment (due Feb. 10): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 4
- Writing Assignment (due Feb. 10): Assignment 3 – News release lead

#### **Session 4**

February 10

*Quiz 1, working with journalists and bloggers, talking points*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 4, Assignment 3
- Reading Assignment (due Feb. 17): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 5 (except pages 123-128)
- Writing Assignment (due Feb. 17): Assignment 4 – Talking points

## **Session 5**

February 17

*Writing the news release*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 5 (except pages 123-128), Assignment 4
- Reading Assignment (due Feb. 24): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 6
- Writing Assignment (due Feb. 24): Assignment 5 – News release, first draft

## **Session 6**

February 24

*Preparing fact sheets, advisories, media kits and pitches*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 6, Assignment 5 first draft
- Reading Assignment (due March 10): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 7
- Writing Assignment (due March 10): Assignment 6 – Fact sheet

**No class March 3, Spring Break**

## **Session 7**

March 10

*Quiz 2, creating news features and op-eds*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 7, Assignment 5 final draft, Assignment 6
- Reading Assignment (due March 17): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 8
- Writing Assignment (due March 17): Assignment 7 – Feature story, first draft

## **Session 8**

March 17

*Selecting publicity photos and graphics, infographics*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 8, Assignment 7 first draft
- Reading Assignment (due March 24): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 9
- Writing Assignment (due March 24):: Assignment 8 – Infographic creative brief

## **Session 9**

March 24

*Radio, television and online video*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 9, Assignment 8
- Reading Assignment (due March 31): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 12
- Writing Assignment (due March 31): Assignment 9 – Video news release script

## **Session 10**

March 31

*Quiz 3, tapping the web and digital media*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 12, Assignment 7 final draft, Assignment 9
- Reading Assignment (due April 7): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 13
- Writing Assignment (due April 7): Assignment 10 – Blog post

### **Session 11**

April 7

*Newsletters, brochures, Intranets and newsletters*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 13, Assignment 10
- Reading Assignment (due April 14): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 14 and 15
- Writing Assignment (due April 14): Assignment 11 – Newsletter article, first draft

### **Session 12**

April 14

*Writing emails, memos and proposals; giving speeches and presentations*

- Due: Wilcox and Reber Ch. 14 and 15, Assignment 11 first draft
- Reading Assignment (due April 28): Wilcox and Reber Ch. 15
- Writing Assignment (due April 28): Assignment 12 – Speech script

**No class April 21, Easter Holiday**

### **Session 13**

April 28

*Quiz 4, class speeches*

- Due: Assignment 11 final draft, Assignment 12