

**Loyola University Chicago**  
**COMM 318/Public Relations Writing**

Spring 2015

Mondays, 7:00 PM to 9:30 PM

Instructor: Kathy Cummings

School of Communication

(708) 207 9121

Kcummings1@luc.edu

**Course Description**

This course is designed to teach skills of persuasive writing that will be a great value for anyone seeking employment in public relations, corporate communications or any of the information industries.

**Course Objective**

To develop an understanding for creating content strategies that drive business results through not just impactful owned, earned and paid media coverage, but strong message pull through.

**Learning Outcomes**

You will learn all forms of writing for public relations and communications, including press releases, media alerts, public service announcements, op-eds, blogs, key messages, executive messages, executive bios, speeches, company fact sheets and more. You will learn to develop a “Message Box” as a platform on which all PR content will flow. Emphasis will be on research, preparation, writing and editing.

Successful students will be able to go to job interviews with the assurance that they have had professional exposure to the writing required for a PR career, with sample writings to share.

**Textbook**

*Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*, by Dennis L. Wilcox, Bryan H. Reber

**Class Requirements**

Over the course of the semester, students will write 5-10 press releases, 2-3 blog articles, an executive memo, a PSA, an executive speech and other communications collateral. A final portfolio of work will be due at the end of the semester.

Additionally, you will be required to read and give summaries on daily newspaper articles, magazine cover stories and digital news briefs. Short quizzes are used to review discussions and readings. There will be a midterm and final exam. Professionalism, attendance and participation will all factor into your final grade.

## **Grading**

Students will be expected to know material covered in lectures and the textbook. You should expect to write and edit materials before receiving a final grade. I give my students opportunity to perfect their work and improve their grade.

Every press release assignment includes a “pre-writing” exercise, worth 25 percent of your grade. The lead is worth 40 percent and the rest of the release about 35 percent. Learning to write is not learning a string of “facts.” It’s learning a craft. It takes time and effort. What ultimately matters is your progress and the level of skill you achieve, rather than how long it takes you to get there.

## **Final Grade scale**

100-94: A  
93-90: A-  
89-88: B+  
87-83: B  
82-80: B-  
79-78: C+  
77-73: C  
72-70: C-  
69-68: D+  
67-64: D  
62-60: D-  
59-0: F

## **Instructor Office Hours**

Mondays: 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

## **Professionalism**

You are expected to act in a professional manner in class. That means approaching your schoolwork as if it were your job. Showing up, and showing up on time, are critical. Letting the instructor know ahead of time of an absence is crucial. Unexcused absences will affect your final grade.

## **Additional Classroom Policies**

- Students are expected to be actively engaged in class discussions and to study all assigned readings by the due date.
- Students are responsible for all readings whether or not they are discussed in lectures.
- No late assignments will be accepted.
- All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced and proofread. Errors in grammar, spelling and organization will result in a lower grade.
- Please turn off all laptops, cell phones, iPods, Blackberrys, etc. Do not text or Tweet in class.

## **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. 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;
- 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.

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 <http://luc.edu/english/writing.shtml#source> .

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during 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.

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 appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

A complete description of the School of Communication Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <http://www.luc.edu/soc/Policy.shtml>

## **Schedule**

### **Week One**

Writing for PR Overview

### **Week Two**

No Class – Martin Luther King Day

### **Week Three**

Chapters 1 & 2: Getting Organized & Becoming Persuasive

### **Week Four**

Chapter 3: Finding & Making News

### **Week Five**

Chapter 4: Working w/ Journalists & Bloggers

### **Week Six**

Chapter 5: Writing the Press Release

### **Week Seven**

Preparing Media Materials

### **Week Eight**

No Class – Spring Break

### **Week Nine**

Midterm Exam: Multiple Choice & Writing Exercise  
Creating News Features & Op-Eds

**Week Ten**

Publicity Photos & Graphics  
Radio, Television & Video

**Week Eleven**

Distributing News to the Media  
Avoiding Legal Issues

**Week Twelve**

The Web & Social Media  
Other Forms of Business Writing

**Week Thirteen**

Speeches & Presentations  
Using Direct Mail & Advertising

**Week Fourteen**

Meetings & Events  
Measuring for Success

**Week Fifteen**

Wrap Up  
Prep for Final

**Final**

Exam: Multiple Choice & Writing Exercise  
Portfolio Due