

Loyola University Chicago
COMM 318 – 21W: Public Relations Writing
Spring Semester 2020 Course Syllabus
Corboy Law Center, Room 710
Tuesday & Thursday 2:30 – 3:45 p.m.

Instructor: Alyssa Burns
Telephone: 312-543-0361
Email: aburns1@luc.edu
Office Hours: Please call or text me 24 hours beforehand to make an appt. before or after class
(*I encourage student/faculty interaction outside of class*)

Required Texts:

1. *Strategic Writing: Multimedia Writing for Public Relations, Advertising and More* – 4th Edition by Charles Marsh, David Guth and Bonnie Poovey Short, ISBN# 9781138037120
 2. *Associated Press Stylebook* 2017 or 2018 (available as a book, app or online) ISBN# 978-0-917360-67-1
- Additional readings will also be provided or recommended by the instructor in class.

Course Description

Students will learn the key components of effective public relations writing, in this writing intensive course. News releases, pitch letters, fact sheets, bios, key messages/Q&A, social media and a communication plan are among the many types of writing we will practice and refine. News value and journalistic perspective will be discussed as well. Editing and proofreading will be strong emphasized. Writing assignments will be completed in class as well as out of class.

At the end of the semester, you'll present your best work in a printed portfolio. Please keep all assignments until after the class ends.

Writing Intensive:

This course is designated as a writing intensive course for purposes of your Loyola curriculum. For more information visit <https://www.luc.edu/sustainability/academics/academicrequirements/writingintensiverequirement/>

Information about AP Style

For many years, the public relations industry has been very connected to the newspaper industry. Because newspapers use Associated Press (AP) Style, this is the standard format for print-based public relations writing. Today, most news has moved online, although AP Style is still important as a foundation for written communication. First, you *will* be pitching journalists in your career. Second, AP Style brings discipline and consistency to your writing. Knowing AP Style is a mark of your status as a professional. Finally, when you seek employment, you'll take a writing test as part of the application process. That test will most likely include knowledge of AP Style.

Course Objectives:

- Develop an understanding of public relations writing methods and develop competency in writing and editing
- Develop a portfolio of writing samples
- Provide hands-on experience in communications planning and writing

Class Requirements: Over the course of the semester, students will have the chance to collaborate on plans, write, and present assignments, write news releases, executive memos, media pitches, key messages, and other communications collateral. Additionally, students will create a communications plan for real businesses.

Since an understanding of the news and business trends are imperative in this field, you will be asked to read and give summaries on news coverage of local, national and international significance. Assignments will be used to review discussions and readings. There will be numerous writing assignments, a midterm and a final class project. Attendance, participation and professionalism will affect the final grade. All classroom activities are designed to prepare students for the work environment and real-world professional challenges.

Students will be expected to know material covered in lectures. It will be critical to keep up with the direction regarding assigned readings, and on news here and around the world.

Please remember that in public relations you are frequently writing to a professional audience. Structure your writing style accordingly. Content, quality, persuasiveness and neatness count. Check your facts and proofread your work.

I do not tolerate typographical errors; therefore, each spelling mistake is an automatic two-point deduction. Each punctuation error is a one-point deduction. Each error in grammar is a three-point deduction.

Classroom Environment

Students are expected to act in a professional manner in class. This includes showing up and being on time. You must let me know ahead of time if you'll be absent, not after the class has started. Unexcused absences will adversely affect your final grade.

Tips for succeeding in the course:

- Attend class. Read the text but be mindful of instructor updates. If something is not clear, ask about it in class. ASKING QUESTIONS AND CLASS PARTICIPATION IS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED. Please raise your hand to contribute something or ask a question, but most of all, communicators must communicate, so participate!
- Proof and edit your work. Re-write, edit, and edit again. Follow AP Style. Use more than spell check. An innocent typo can make you look sloppy. *I will take points off for typos and grammar mistakes in assignments.*
- Keep up with the work and the readings.
- Style points count. A good-looking paper or presentation has a way of earning extra attention.

Attendance

The instructor does not recommend missing any class sessions as in-class exercises or homework could be given in your absence. I take attendance at each class and this is factored into your grade. If you miss a class, make arrangements to get assignments from another student and complete them by the due date.

Absences on the day of a test or when a project is due will not be acceptable. No exceptions. You will be required to present medical or other emergency/official documentation explaining your absence before you will be permitted to make up an exam.

Original Work

Originality is the hallmark of the public relations industry. Anyone caught plagiarizing in this class will receive a grade of "F" for the assignment.

Deadlines

Public relations practitioners always meet deadlines. Assignments are due in class. Late assignments will not be accepted. If you must miss a class your assignment must still arrive on time. Penalties for missed deadlines are even more severe in the real world.

Additional Classroom Policies

- Cell phones are not allowed to be used during class. They must be turned off and put away. No texting, tweeting, Instagramming, emailing, etc. Laptops may be used for taking notes only, not for checking your email or looking at YouTube.

Assignments and Breakdown of Grade

Class participation and assignments are essential to obtain a good grade in this course. If you come to class unprepared, or if you do not come to class, or fail to complete all of your assignments on time, it will be difficult to get a good grade.

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

This course consists of completing the following projects:

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS – 50% (500 pts)

Please Note: I need a hard copy of every written assignment. #1: You will post it on Sakai by the due date, and #2: You will also provide a hard copy to me in class the day it's due.

Written assignments will vary and are designed to expose you to the public relations process and different writing skills. Some assignments may be completed in class; others will be assigned as homework. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to get the assignment from another student. There are many things we'll learn in this class, including how to write:

- News releases (various types, for different kinds of audiences) – 40 pts for each release (2)
- Media Pitches – 25 pts for each pitch (2)
- Key messages/Q&A – 40 pts
- Fact Sheets: Company and New Product Fact Sheets – 20 pts for each fact sheet (2)
- Writing for Social Media (Twitter-15, Instagram-15, LinkedIn-20) – 50 pts
- Speeches (PowerPoint presentations along with speaking notes) – 35 pts
- Professional Bio – 20 pts
- Thank you notes to Guest Speakers – 10 pts for each note (5 guest speakers) – 50 pts
- Blog Assignment – 25 pts
- Your Resume – 25 pts
- Paper on a Business Trend in the Media – 20 pts
- Paper on an Influencer – 20 pts
- Answers to Diversity Questions – 20 pts
- Writing exercise/paper on “Outside My Comfort Zone” – 25 pts

ATTENDANCE– 15% (150 pts)

Attendance and timeliness will be monitored each class with a point system

- Attendance (5 points per class)
- No notice of missed class = (0 points)

PROJECTS/EXAM – 35% (350 pts)

- Midterm: AP Style Test (50)
- Individual Project: Build a Relationship with a Public Relations Professional via Social Media (100)
- Client Project: Communications Plan for a Business (200)

CLASS SCHEDULE

Note: This course schedule is likely to change throughout the semester. Assignments may shift or change based on class progress. Any changes will be communicated in advance and adequate preparation time will be given. I will be bringing in Guest Speakers throughout the semester. They are listed on the syllabus, although schedules often change so if there are any updates, I will let you know.

Week One

Tuesday, Jan. 14

WELCOME!

- Introductions
- Course Overview
- Expectations and Outcomes
- Professional Goals
- Attendance and Participation
- Semester Topics
- Guest Speakers
- The Opportunity to Work with Real Businesses
- The Importance of Following the News
- AP Style

Homework for Thursday, Jan. 16: Read in the textbook Sections 1: Strategic Writing 1A (Intro), 1B (The Importance of Good Writing), 1C (Research, Planning in the Writing Process)

Read: This article on résumés: https://www.theladders.com/career-advice/google-recruiters-say-they-always-want-to-see-the-x-y-z-formula-on-successful-resumes-heres-how-to-use-it?subscriber_type=reader&utm_source=member&utm_content=1-7%20%20FOR%20SEND&utm_medium=email&utm_term=DNL-1-7-20%20SEND&utm_campaign=daily-newsletter

Look at your current resume and think of how you can make it better with these tips. One of your assignments is to hone your resume, so start thinking about this formula now.

Thursday, Jan. 16

Review of sections 1A, 1B, 1C in textbook in class

Discuss Semester Assignment: Build a Relationship with a PR Professional

- Using social media alone, build a relationship with a public relations professional and see how much you can learn about his/her job and the industry over the course of the semester. You will be required to submit LinkedIn exchanges and Twitter streams to demonstrate how well you have fulfilled the assignment.
- Since this project is being assigned at the beginning of the semester, you will have three months to actually build the relationship. You will learn that you need to listen and observe first, before attempting to engage. Don't wait until the last minute to do this. Start thinking of it now.

Homework for Jan. 21: Read Section 2Q on Fact Sheets. In addition, find 3-5 PR Professionals as potential subjects for the Semester Assignment

Assignment: Work on/update your resume, based on the article you read that was assigned on Jan. 14. Due Tuesday, Jan 21. Bring a hard copy to class.

Week Two

Tuesday, Jan. 21

Turn in homework assignment: Your resume

Answer any questions re: Building a Relationship with a PR Professional Assignment

Review how to write a Fact Sheet in class

Homework: Read Sections 2G (News Release Guidelines), 2H (Announcement News Releases) and 2I (Feature News Releases) in book (pgs. 87-102)

Assignment: Write a fact sheet based on information Professor Burns sends you; due Thursday, Jan. 23. Bring a hard copy to class.

Thursday, Jan. 23

Turn in homework assignment: Fact sheet

Review "The Anatomy of a Press Release" in class

Show examples of good and bad press releases

Homework: Find two (2) product press releases from company websites and determine if they follow the guidelines I provided in class. Be prepared to discuss in class. I will call on each of you to provide your feedback.

Assignment: Pick a business trend that's currently in the media that interests you and why you think it's significant. Note 3-4 sources where it's mentioned and the various ways that particular trend is being covered in different media outlets. This paper needs to be one – 1.5 pages. Due Tuesday, Jan. 28. Bring a hard copy to class.

Week Three

Tuesday, Jan. 28

Due: Paper on a business trend in the media

Homework: Read article about multicultural marketing: <https://instituteforpr.org/what-advertising-missteps-can-teach-us-about-multicultural-marketing/>

Assignment: Answer specific questions assigned by Prof. Burns in Section 1J: Diversity & Strategic Writing

Thursday, Jan. 30

Due: Assignment on questions on Diversity & Strategic Writing

Homework: Read article: 5 Ways Writing Frequently Will Help Your Communication Skills

<https://www.business2community.com/communications/5-ways-writing-frequently-will-help-your-communication-skills-02251745>

Assignment: Write a one-1.5 page paper about an experience you had that took you outside of your comfort zone. Review the article above and articulate your thoughts on paper. Your audience is Prof. Burns. Be descriptive about what you learned and the impact it had on you. Due, Thursday, Feb. 6

Week Four

Tuesday, Feb 4:

No class, Professor traveling for work

Homework: Review AP Style Guide “cheat sheet.” This is important and will be the basis of all of your writing, plus it will make up the entirety of the Midterm.

Thursday, Feb. 6:

Turn in writing assignment that articulates your “outside your comfort zone” experience

Read your papers in class

Homework: Read Section 2M in textbook on “Pitches” (pgs. 112-117). Also, read this article, “5 Public Relations Tips to Help You Write a Pitch Someone Will Actually Read” <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/297107>

Week Five

Tuesday, Feb. 11

Review “The Nitty Gritty of Pitching” in class

Discuss good pitch letters

Review bad pitches

Homework: Read Section 1F; Broadcast/Podcast Writing in textbook. Read the “10 Basic Rules of Broadcast/Podcast Writing” in the book. Also review the bottom of pg. 30 & pg. 31 for script cues (starting with “Actuality” and going to “Zoom”)

Assignment: Find two podcasts you like and be prepared to discuss why you like them in class on Feb. 13, plus review LinkedIn Profile of upcoming Guest Speaker and determine two questions to ask before, during or after speaker’s presentation

Thursday, Feb. 13

GUEST SPEAKER – Annie Frances Peck, CEO, Not Just Annie Style

Discuss Podcasts

Quick review of script cues. Be sure you know them as I’ll ask you to explain them.

Homework: Read Section 2D in the textbook on Blogs (pg. 74-77)

Week Six

Tuesday, Feb. 18

Write thank you note to Guest Speaker

Review of “4 Essential Elements to Writing a Great Blog Post” in class

Assignment: Write a blog on one of the following topics:

1. Top 5 Things No One Knows About Me
2. A Lesson Learned (Did you try something that didn’t work out? Is there a mistake you made that had significant consequences?)
3. How My Grandparents Describe Gen Z
4. The Most Common Stereotypes, Where They Came From, and Their Consequences or Effects

Follow the process we covered in today’s class. Your blog is due Thursday, Feb. 20. Bring a hard copy to class.

Thursday, Feb. 20

GUEST SPEAKER – Joanna Esposito, CEO, The Avenue Floor & Design

Discuss blog assignment. If you’d like feedback or additional time to refine your assignment, you can work on it in class

Discuss topics to be covered on Midterm Exam

Review examples of Professional Bios in class

Review LinkedIn Profile of Guest Speaker and determine two questions to ask before, during or after speaker’s presentation

Week Seven

Tuesday, Feb. 25:

Write thank you note to Guest Speaker

GUEST SPEAKER – Lisa McMillan, Executive Director, EMDR Research Foundation

Homework: Write a Professional Bio about Lisa McMillan, due Thursday, Feb. 27. Bring a hard copy to class.

Thursday, Feb. 27:

Turn in Professional Bio assignment

Write thank you note to Guest Speaker

Midterm Exam: AP Style Test - includes T/F, Open-Ended Questions + Bonus Questions

Homework: None! Enjoy your break☀️

Week Eight

Tuesday, March 3 & Thursday, March 5: NO CLASS: Spring Break

Week Nine

Tuesday, March 10:

Touch base in class about Building a Relationship with a PR Professional Assignment; review results to date

Professor assigns Team Projects

Discuss How to Write an Executive Memo in class

Homework: Read Section 1E "Writing for Social Media" (pg. 26-27) and Section 2B "Social Media in Public Relations" (pg. 66-67)

Assignment: Write a one – 1.5 pg. paper on one Influencer you follow and why you think that Influencer is persuasive. Have you bought a product he/she recommended? Why? Or why not? Due Thursday, March 12. Bring a hard copy to class.

Thursday, March 12:

Turn in Influencer assignment

GUEST SPEAKER – Becca Berkenstadt, CEO, Worldly Strategies

Assignment: Write an Instagram post for Becca's business. Due Tuesday, March 17. Bring a hard copy to class.

Week 10

Tuesday, March 17

Write thank you note to Guest Speaker

In class: Write a LinkedIn post for Becca's business

Review How to Write Key Messages in class

Discuss assignment on writing Q&A/Key Messages

Thursday, March 19

In class: Work on assignment on writing Q&A/Key Messages

Homework: Read Section 2U on "Speeches" (pg. 151 – 157)

Week 11

Tuesday, March 24

Turn in your key messages/Q&A assignment

Review Speech structure in class

Assignment: Create an outline for a fundraising speech

Thursday, March 26

GUEST SPEAKER: Lindley White to discuss Executive Communications

In class: Work on developing fundraising speech, due Tuesday, March 31. Bring a hard copy to class.

Week 12

Tuesday, March 31

Turn in speech assignment

Review How to Write a Comprehensive PR Plan: Part One in class

Thursday, April 2:

Review How to Write a Comprehensive PR Plan: Part Two in class

Homework: Read this article: <https://www.inc.com/ron-burley/5-rules-for-dealing-with-the-media.html>

Week 13

Tuesday, April 7

Review How to Deal with the Media in class

Thursday, April 9: NO CLASS, Easter Break

Week 14

Tuesday, April 14

“Ask the Professor”

Thursday, April 16

Teamwork time to prep for Final PR Plan Presentations

Week 15

Tuesday, April 21

Teamwork time to prep for Final PR Plan Presentations

Thursday, April 23

Teamwork time to prep for Final PR Plan Presentations

Week 16

Final Exam: **Saturday, May 2, 4:15 p.m.**

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.

Students with Special Accommodations: Students who need special accommodations for exams or class meetings because of a learning disability will provide you with a letter documenting the type of accommodations needed. If they claim to have a physical or psychological condition that hinders their ability to perform in class, medical documentation must be provided to the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) and that office will assess whether or not your collaboration is required. These matters are confidential.

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Special Accommodations confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Military Service: Students who have been called into the armed services of the United States and who are consequently withdrawing from the university before the end of the withdrawal period will receive a refund of all tuition and fees paid for the period in question but no academic credit. If they withdraw after the end of the withdrawal period, they will receive full academic credit for the semester with grades as of the date of withdrawal but no refund of tuition.

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 – just email me or schedule a meeting with me during office hours. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: LUC.edu/dos or LUC.edu/csaa; phone number 773-508-8840, email deanofstudents@luc.edu.

About Your Instructor: Alyssa Burns

I have had a successful career in the marketing, communications and public relations business, with experience at the top global Public Relations firm Edelman Worldwide, and the Fortune 100 company Kraft Foods. I've been the president of my own business, Alyssa Burns Communications, for six years, where I work with a wide range of clients. I learned that it's always about our clients or our audiences. Focusing on that will be a big part of what we do in this course.

I grew up in a family of journalists, so we were always discussing current events. This piqued my interest in learning as much as I could about any topic that interested me – the arts, music, sports, travel, business – you name it; I wanted to learn about it.

I love to travel and call myself a “travel adventurer.” I plan to keep traveling the world until I can't walk anymore. My favorite quote is by Saint Augustine: *“The world is a book. Those who do not travel read only a page.”*

I am former President of the Professional Women's Club of Chicago (PWCC), a 300-member networking organization promoting the professional and personal development of its members. I established the Mentorship Program and currently serve as a role model, sharing knowledge, problem-solving skills and advice to help others grow professionally.

I have taught several classes at Loyola, including Principles of Advertising, Principles of Public Relations, Ethics & Communications and Business & Professional Speaking. I will share all of my experience with you, you can be sure. I look forward to sharing this journey with each one of you. Here's to a great semester ahead!

– Professor Burns

