

COMM 3320: Writing for Public Relations & Corporate Communication
University of Texas at El Paso
Online | Spring 2021 | CRN# 28986 | January 19-May 6, 2021

I. Instructor Information

Professor: Keri Moe, M.A.

Telephone: 915-373-5096, it is okay to text me

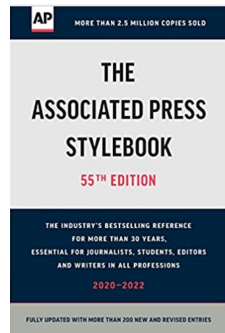
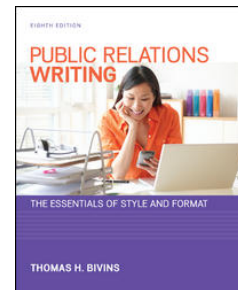
Email: Blackboard email preferred or KLMOE@utep.edu

(Note: In emails and phone messages, please state your first and last name and which section number you are in.)

Office Hours: I am available most times 7 days a week, including evenings and weekends by appointment. Schedule a phone call, an online “chat” or a face to face meeting. Let me know what times are best for you and we will schedule a time. I am here to help you! Normal response time is within 24 hours M-F and within 48 hours on weekends, but often much quicker.

II. Required Text & Materials:

- Bivens, Thomas H. (2014). Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format, 8th Edition
ISBN-13: 978-0073526232
ISBN-10: 0073526231
- Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, 55th edition
ISBN-13: 978-1541647572
ISBN-10: 1541647572
- USB Drive or Cloud Service to save writing and coursework--***you should save all work before submitting in on Blackboard for your own records and for proper editing purposes.***



III. Requirements:

Prerequisite: English 1312 with a grade of "C" or better. While not a required pre-requisite, COMM 2371: Writing for the Mass Media or other COMM writing courses or COMM 3321: Public Relations would be helpful background for this course.

Online Class Skill Requirements—This is a completely online course which requires specific Internet, computer and technological skills, including:

1. Ability to utilize word processing programs
2. Ability to upload and download papers and documents, as instructed, by the due dates provided
3. Ability to use email, discussion boards, and chat rooms
4. Ability to take tests online, with a reliable internet connection
5. Ability to read Adobe files. [Link to Download Adobe Acrobat Reader to view PDF files.](#)
6. Ability to watch video files with a media player
7. Ability to read course material and work independently to complete coursework by assigned dates
8. Ability to read and follow detailed written instructions
9. Ability to be self-motivated, manage time wisely and meet deadlines

Click here to learn more about being prepared and [learning online](#). Just like time management will be vital to success in your public relations career it is also important to [manage your time effectively in an online course](#). If you need technical assistance with the course, contact [UTEP's Technical Support](#).

III. Course Information:

Catalog Description—Emphasis on writing press releases, newsletters and a variety of instructional and promotional materials used in corporate and other organizational settings. Students will gain experience in analyzing audiences and contexts for public relations and corporate communication writing, and will develop skills in applied writing contexts.

Course Learning Outcomes—

- To understand the critical role of strong writing and different types of writing public relations and corporate communication.
- To develop appropriate audience-centered material for diverse publics, contexts and multiple formats, including print and electronic media.
- To learn to organize and write news releases, speeches and other written material used in public relations and corporate communication.
- To construct clear and concise messages following The Associated Press Stylebook Guidelines.
- To recognize the importance of creating, integrating strategy and delivering effective public relations messages in order to meet organizational goals.
- To discern the relative priorities of clients, organizations, editors as well as internal and external audiences.
- To understand the ethical obligations and dilemmas faced by PR writers.
- To develop a portfolio of writing samples.

IV. Course Overview and Grades**:

Week 1—Introduction, Ethics, PR Writing Basics

Weeks 2-4—Audience Analysis, Planning & Research, Message & Medium

Weeks 5-7—Writing for the Media, News Releases

Weeks 8-10—PR Writing for TV, Radio, the Web & Social Media

Weeks 11-13—Writing for Publications & Corporate Communication

Weeks 14-15—Speeches & Presentations &

Ongoing & Week 16--Public Relations Portfolio

Since this is a writing course, significant attention will be placed on format, grammar and spelling. Writing assignments should be proofread, adhere to the Associated Press Stylebook Guidelines and pay significant attention to detail. Failure to do so will result in an automatic deduction of one letter grade. For assistance with proofreading, you may visit the [UTEP Writing Center](#).

Public Relations Writing & Skills Practice (350 points)-

(10 at 35 points each)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1) Memo to CEO | 6) Media Alert, Pitch Letter, Fact Sheet |
| 2) Write an Op-Ed | 7) Writing for Radio |
| 3) Issue Statement | 8) Writing for TV |
| 4) Elements of a Communication Plan | 9) Feature Story |
| 5) News Release | 10) Speech Writing |

PR Writing Portfolio (200 Points):

The culmination of what you have learned in this class will be displayed in a portfolio to be turned in at the end of the semester which will contain a minimum of 10 writing samples. You will find that a portfolio of your best writing also will be helpful in interviews for internships and jobs. Even after you get a job, you always want to maintain your portfolio and keep it current, updating it with your most recent and strongest writing samples. **Your final portfolio must have 10 total samples of your original writing.** The following 7 items are required: 1. Your Updated Resume; 2 & 3. News Releases, Two Different Types; 4. & 5. Feature Stories, Two Different Types; 6. News Alert/Media Advisory; 7. Backgrounder/Fact Sheet. The remaining 3 items are of your choosing from any of the following: Letter to the Editor (Op-Ed); Direct Mail Piece/Donor Solicitation Letter; Speech/Remarks Script; Memo; Blog Entry; Twitter Posts (min. 5); Other PR Writing Sample of Your Choice; Public Relations Plan*; Tri-Fold Brochure*; Newsletter*, Annual Report*. (*These items will also count as extra credit, if properly formatted and complete. They should be placed in an "Extra Credit" section at the end of the portfolio.)

Examinations (330 points):

(6 @ 55 Points each)

Exams are based on modules and chapter reading.

Discussions (120 points):

Discussions (6 @ 20 Points each) For discussions, you should be sure to professionally address all questions as directed by the prompt. Unless specified otherwise in the instructions, discussion postings should be a minimum of 200 words. In addition, you should respond to at least three of your peers with a minimum of a 100 word thoughtful, yet respectful response to their post as it relates to course content.

Note: You should post in the discussion at least 3-5 days in advance of the due date to give your peers time to respond.

Optional Extra Credit (Not to exceed 50 points):

Students can get up to a maximum of 50 extra credit points for visiting the writing center, submitting certain written pieces in their portfolio or by having their resume critiqued at Career Services or by a PR professional.

- ✓ Visiting the Writing Center--students can get up to 25 points extra credit, 5 points per visit or online consultation. Students should scan documentation of their visit and submit it in the Extra Credit Assignment submission box available in Week 7 of the course. Please submit all records at one time. It is the student's responsibility to request documentation and submit it before the deadline.
- ✓ Submitting items marked with an asterisk* as part of the Portfolio--Students can also get up to 25 points extra credit for submitting up to one of the items marked with an asterisk* in the PR portfolio, see project guidelines. Place these in an "Extra Credit" section at the end of the portfolio.
- ✓ Resume Critique--Have your resume critiqued by a PR or communication professional or by UTEP's Career Services and earn up to 25 points. Submit a copy of the critiqued resume along with the name and contact information for the professional who evaluated it with your final portfolio. Note: it will be important to draft your resume in advance and schedule an appointment early in the semester to meet time requirements for this option.

Grading Scale:

A=900-1,000 points; B= 800-899 points; C=700-799 points; D=600-699 points; F=599 points and below

****All assignments are available starting the first day of class with specific guidelines. Students are encouraged to work ahead. It is the student's responsibility to be informed of changes to due dates that are announced in Blackboard. **There is no late or make up work.** Start assignments early. If you finish early, you can't be late!**

IV. Instructor Policies:

Attendance/Late Work: REGULAR CLASS PARTICIPATION IS IMPERATIVE. Class participation includes reading the text, participating in online discussions, completing assignments and exercises, and being active in the course. Students should expect to check online at minimum every 48 hours and devote a significant amount of time to completing course objectives. Changes or updates will be posted online or sent via Blackboard email. Failure to be online regularly, to check emails or other postings, is not an excuse for being unprepared. An online course takes just as much time— sometimes more—as a traditional face-to-face course. This course requires students to read the text, complete online modules, assignments and assessments. Students must read the book, work through the modules and complete the assignments. **Remember, writing can be a time consuming process. Just as Public Relations professionals manage multiple projects and tight deadlines, this course will require the same. Reputations are made on the ability to meet deadlines. Time management and committing time to this class is required to be successful.**

By enrolling in this class and accepting this syllabus, you agree to come actively participate and engage in this online experience. **If you fail to log on for more three days, or if you miss more than 2 major assignments, you risk being dropped from the course.**

Since all assignments are posted in advance, **THERE IS NO MAKEUP OR LATE WORK. Not submitting an assignment by the time indicated on the due date will result in a zero (0). Having technical difficulties (computer crashing, loss of Internet connection, etc.) is NOT an excuse for not submitting work on time.** Students should have a backup plan should their primary internet access point not work. For example, if your internet goes down or your computer crashes, what will you do to get your work in on time? Going to a computer lab at on campus or public libraries or calling a friend or family member are good back up plans. What is yours? The instructor highly recommends submitting work early and not waiting to the last minute. Asking for an extension because you waited to the last minute is not acceptable. Plan ahead, if you are early, you can't be late! If you experience a documentable, excused extenuating circumstance (i.e. hospitalization, etc.) you must notify the professor in a timely manner.

Classroom Behavior: This is a college class and even though we do not meet face to face, mature, respectful and responsible classroom behavior is expected at all times. **You are studying to become a Public Relations professional and therefore, must embody all qualities of an engaging, strong and dynamic communicator.** Students who fail to show appropriate online demeanor or classroom behavior will receive one warning. If inappropriate behavior continues, the student will risk receiving a lower grade or being dropped from the class. Just as you would be expected to do as a Public Relations professional, students must maintain proper academic decorum in emails, discussions, postings and all online communication—writing must contain proper grammar and punctuation. Students must adhere to the following netiquette policy.

Netiquette Policy*:

Students should:

- 1) Display the highest level of professionalism in all communication
- 2) While it is okay to disagree in online discussions or when collaborating, it is important to listen to the other person's perspective and engage with respect

Students are expected to NOT engage in the following CMC (computer-mediated communication) behavior:

- 3) Harassing others through language, frequency or message size.
- 4) Altering others' message content with intent to deceive
- 5) Disguising sender identity/email header information
- 6) Using profane or vulgar language
- 7) Sending impolite or abusive messages
- 8) Revealing personal contact information of other students or faculty without permission
- 9) Discussing or revealing illegal or unlawful activities

***Failure to maintain proper online decorum in any way puts a student at risk of being dropped from the class.**

Work Guidelines: Students are expected to follow instructions and submit work on time. All work must be submitted by the date and time indicated. Work should also be proofread to avoid errors in grammar, spelling, etc. Points will be taken off for work that is not of collegiate quality and professionalism. An online course requires thoughtful and clear written responses. Formal writing should be used at all times, including in emails, discussions and of course, assignments. For example, it is not appropriate to submit discussion posts or emails using "u" for "you", etc. Students are expected to do their own work and writing.

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, is not acceptable. Students must give credit and document sources of all research that is not original. Failure to maintain academic integrity could result in failing the assignment, failing the course for the semester and/or being reported to college administration for further disciplinary action since it is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion.

- Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports.
- Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents another person's words or ideas as his or her own.
- Collusion involves unauthorized collaboration with another person or group to commit any academically dishonest act.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. You can find more information in the [UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures](#), under the heading "Alleged Student Scholastic Dishonesty," and in the Regents' Rules and Regulations.

Grammatical & Factual Errors: Because this is a writing course as much as anything else, strong mechanics are expected. WE WILL USE AP STYLE ON ALL ASSIGNMENTS. Therefore, you will need the AP Style Handbook as a reference, which is required. This is to help you prepare for what is expected of you in a professional setting. Any paper containing a major factual error will receive an automatic deduction of at least a letter grade. A major factual error is defined as one that gives the wrong information to the audience, including such things as misspelling the client's name, incorrect identification of key sources, or having the wrong place and time for an upcoming event. Errors that do a minor disservice to the reader, such as incorrect time or place for a past event, will be graded somewhat more lenient, but remember CHECK YOUR FACTS AND MAKE SURE THEY ARE RIGHT TO AVOID ANY AND ALL GRADE DEDUCTIONS. Some of the assignments assigned in class will be drawn from hypothetical or existing situations. For example, you might be given a fact sheet and then asked to write a news release based on the presented information. In these cases, it is crucial that you DO NOT COPY the text given word-for-word. Instead, you should paraphrase and attribute sources when necessary.

Course Copyright Notice: Many of the materials that are posted within this course are protected by copyright law. These materials are only for the use of students enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further retained or disseminated.

Dropping the Course: If necessary, it is the responsibility of the student to drop the course by the date indicated in the [UTEP Academic Calendar](#). The professor reserves the right to drop students for lack of course pursuit or failure to maintain proper decorum.

Disability Statement: If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit the office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the [CASS website](#).

Calendar: See next page.

V.

Graded Coursework List & Due Date Checklist

Use this calendar as a checklist to make sure you have completed all graded coursework. You should complete the reading and module content before beginning graded coursework. You should open assignments in advance to see what is required and plan your time accordingly. Remember to open and view assignments at the beginning of the week or earlier. If you open assignments too late, you may not have enough time to complete them by the deadline. *You are encouraged to work ahead. There is no penalty for early submissions. Late work is not accepted. **Note: You should post in the discussion at least 3-5 days in advance of the due date to give your peers time to respond.**

All work for week 1-2 is due by 11:55 p.m. on February 6th

- ✓ Read syllabus & begin working in course modules by the 2nd day of class
- ✓ Purchase textbooks by August 31st
 - Bivens, Thomas H. (2014). Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format, 8th Edition
ISBN-13: 978-0073526232
ISBN-10: 0073526231
 - Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, 2017
- ✓ Read Bivens Chapters 1 and 2
- ✓ Go to the Week 7 Module and Open the “PR Portfolio Assignment” so you can plan ahead and properly manage your time to complete it by the deadline.
- Discussion Post #1 Introduction
- Discussion Post #2 PR Research & Resources
- Week 1 Test
- PR Writing & Skills Practice #1 Memo to the CEO
- PR Writing & Skills Practice #2 Writing an Op-Ed

Weeks 3-4—Audience Analysis, Planning & Research

All work for weeks 3-4 is due by 11:55 p.m. on February 20th

- ✓ Read Bivens Chapters 3 & 4
- Week 2 Test
- PR Writing Skills & Practice #3: Issue Statement
- PR Writing & Skills Practice #4: Elements of a Communication Plan

Weeks 5-7—Writing for the Media, News Releases

All work for weeks 5-7 is due by 11:55 p.m. on March 1st

- ✓ Read Bivens Chapters 5 & 7
- Discussion #3: Finding Newsworthy Story Angles
- Week 3 Test
- PR Writing & Skills Practice #5: News Release
- PR Writing & Skills Practice #6: Media Alerts, Pitch Letter or Fact Sheet

Weeks 8-10—PR Writing for TV, Radio, the Web & Social Media

All work for weeks 8-10 is due by 11:55 p.m. on March 29th

- ✓ Read Bivens Chapters 6 & 10
- Discussion #4: Tweet, Tweet
- Week 4 Test
- PR Writing & Skills Practice #7- Writing for TV
- PR Writing & Skills Practice #8- Writing for Radio

{Continued}

Weeks 11-13—Writing for Publications & Corporate Communication

All work for weeks 11-13 is due by 11:55 p.m. on April 12th

- ✓ Read Bivens Chapter 8 & 9
- ☐ Discussion #5: Caption This
- ☐ Week 5 Test
- ☐ PR Writing & Skills Practice #9- Feature Story

Weeks 14-15—Speeches & Presentations

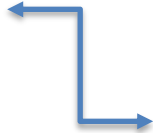
All work for weeks 14-15 is due by 11:55 p.m. on April 26th

- ✓ Read Bivens Chapter 11
- ☐ Discussion #6: Case Study Ghost Writing
- ☐ Week 6 Test
- ☐ PR Writing & Skills Practice #10: Speech Writing

FINAL PROJECT—Public Relations Writing Portfolio

The portfolio is due by 11:55 p.m. on May 5th

- ☐ PR Written Portfolio



****IMPORTANT**** The Public Relations Writing Portfolio is a final project requiring multiple writing samples. It will take a significant amount of time to write, edit and proofread your work. Look at this final project early in the semester and DO NOT wait until the last minute to begin!