

COMM 3320: Writing for Public Relations & Corporate Communication

Department of Communication | University of Texas at El Paso

Online | FALL 2023 | CRN# 12649 | August 28 – December 7, 2023

I. Instructor Information

Professor: Keri Moe, Ed.D.

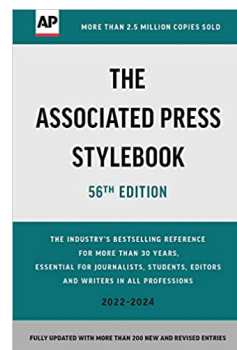
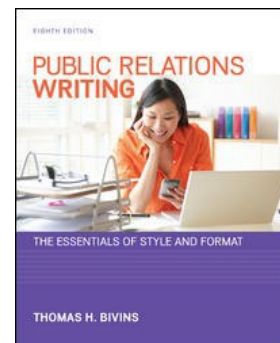
Telephone: 915-373-5096, it is okay to text me.

Email: Blackboard email preferred or KLMOE@UTEP.EDU (Note: In emails and phone messages, please state your first and last name and that you are enrolled in Comm 3320/Writing for PR.)

Office Hours: I am available most times seven days a week, including evenings and weekends, by appointment. Schedule a phonecall or video conference. Let me know what times work best for your schedule and we will schedule a time. I am here to help you! Normal response time to email is within 24 hours M-F and within 48 hours on weekends. Text is fastest way to reach me and get a quick response.

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, any edition after 2022 can be used, however, 56th Edition is best.
- USB Drive or Cloud Service to save writing and coursework.
- Do not upload assignments into Blackboard without saving them.



II. Requirements & Learning System:

Prerequisite: English 1312 with a grade of "C" or better. While not a required prerequisite, COMM 2341: Writing for the Mass Media or other COMM writing course as well as COMM 3321: Public Relations would be helpful background for this course.

Blackboard is the Learning Management System for this Course. This is a completely online course which requires specific Internet, computer and technological skills, including:

- Ability to utilize word processing programs
- Ability to upload and download papers and documents, as instructed, by the due dates provided
- Ability to use email, discussion boards, and chat rooms
- Ability to take tests online, with a reliable internet connection
- Ability to read Adobe files.
- Ability to watch video files with a media player
- Ability to read course material and work independently to complete coursework by assigned dates
- Ability to read and follow detailed written instructions
- Ability to be self-motivated, manage time wisely and meet deadlines

Blackboard is our Learning Management System. Utilize the many Blackboard video tutorials available to learn about its features to help you if needed. You may contact [UTEP Tech Support](#) if you need additional assistance with Blackboard. You will need a computer with basic audio/video output equipment, a good internet connection, and Microsoft Office or similar software. You should write and save your work in Microsoft Word or other program before uploading an assignment to Blackboard. Assignments should be edited and proofread before submission.

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**:

Unit I—Introduction, Ethics, PR Writing Basics

Unit II—Audience Analysis, Planning & Research, Message & Medium

Unit III—Writing for the Media, News Releases

Unit IV—PR Writing for TV, Radio, the Web & Social Media

Unit V—Writing for Publications & Corporate Communication

Unit VI—Speeches & Presentations

Final Project--Public Relations Portfolio

Since this is a writing course, format, grammar and spelling is required. Writing assignments should be proofread, adhere to Associate Press Stylebook Guideline before being submitted. Failure to follow instructions or submitting work with correct grammar, spelling and formatting errors will result in reduced points or a possible failing grade for the assignment. For assistance with proofreading, you may visit the [UTEP Writing Center](#).

Public Relations Writing & Skills (350 points/10 at 35 points each)

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

PR Writing Portfolio (200 Points):

The culmination of what you have learned in this class will be displayed in a portfolio which will be turned in as a final project at the end of the semester. While you may include work from the semester, you should submit an edited, refined and final version of your work. It should represent your best work. You will find that a portfolio of your strongest writing may be helpful for interviews for jobs and internships. Even after you get a job, you always want to maintain your portfolio and keep it current with the strongest examples of your work.

Your final portfolio should have a minimum of 10 writing samples. It should be uploaded as a PDF in the following order.

- 1) Updated Resume
- 2) Media Alert
- 3) News Release
- 4) Feature Story
- 5) Op-Ed/Letter to the Editor
- 6) Speech/Remarks Script
- 7) Sample of Your Choice
- 8) Sample of Your Choice
- 9) Sample of Your Choice
- 10) Sample of Your Choice

Examinations (330 points/6 @ 55 Points each):

Exams are based on modules and chapter reading.

Discussions (120 points/6 @ 20 Points each):

Discussions are an opportunity to share your ideas and interact with your peers. For discussions, you should be sure to professionally address all questions as directed by the prompt. It is important to reference terms and concepts from the text as well examples of public relations from the news as appropriate. 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. Proofread your postings, points will be deducted for spelling and grammatical errors.

Optional Extra Credit (Not to exceed 50 points):

Students can get up to a maximum of 50 extra credit points for consulting the [UTEP 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 Assignments 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 extra items as part of the Portfolio--Students can get up to 25 points extra credit, 5 points per piece, for including extra items besides the 10 required into 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 any changes which will be announced in Blackboard.

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. **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. This is a standard expectation required not only for this course but to be successful working in the industry.**

By enrolling in this class and accepting this syllabus, you agree to come actively participate and engage in this online experience. All assignments are posted the first day of class. Students may work ahead in the course. There is no late work and assignments not submitted by the due date in Blackboard will receive a zero (0). Having technical difficulties is not an excuse for submitting work late. The instructor highly recommends not waiting until the last minute to ensure due dates can be met. Any exception to this policy is for extraordinary circumstances only and will be granted at the professor's discretion, may incur a loss of points and you may be asked to provide documentation of the emergency/extenuating circumstance.

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. As a future public relations professional, you must embody all qualities of an ethical, engaging and strong communicator. Students who fail to show appropriate online demeanor or 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 is prohibited and is considered a violation of rules articulated in UTEP's Handbook of Operating Procedures. It is also contrary to the process of organizational leadership itself, and includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion.

- Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials, falsifying research data, etc.
- Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or unknowingly represents another person's words or ideas as his or her own. You must cite your sources in discussion posts and papers.
- Collusion involves the unauthorized collaboration with another person or group to commit any academically dishonest act. Unless specifically stated in the instructions for a particular assignment, all work should be completed by you alone.

Any sort of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP students is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously. Students will receive a zero on any assignment where there is a reasonable suspicion of cheating, plagiarism, and/or collusion.

Additionally, students who are suspected of academic dishonesty 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. More information can be found in the [UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures](#), under the heading "[Alleged Student Scholastic Dishonesty](#)" and the [UT System Regent's Rules and Regulations](#).

Grammatical & Factual Errors: Because this is a writing course as much as anything else, strong mechanics are expected. Writing should be submitted in the Associated Press Style. 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. 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 read the facts provided, assess what is important and how it should be included into the writing assignment.

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.

Students with Special Needs: The Americans with Disabilities Act requires reasonable accommodations be made for students with documented special needs, and that all materials needed for a course be made available to all students in that course, whether it is face-to-face or online. If you have any special needs that require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. In order to receive accommodations, you will need to make a formal request by contacting the [Center for Accommodations and Support Services \(CASS\)](#) at cass@utep.edu or visit <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/>.

Calendar: Due dates are posted in Blackboard. A calendar of due dates is also posted in the welcome module. The posted 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. Any exceptions are at the discretion of the instructor and limited to documented emergencies.