

The University of Texas at El Paso
Department of Communication

COMM 3320, (CRN 22822):
Writing for Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Spring 2017

M, W 9-10:20 a.m.

Cotton Memorial, 104

Instructor: Lauren Macias-Cervantes

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Office: Hertzog Building, Room 103

Office Hours: M, W: 11a.m.-1p.m., F: 10a.m.-Noon or by appointment

Course Description:

This course focuses on understanding and practicing the writing techniques utilized in diverse public relations media. Emphasis will be given to audience analysis, news releases, media kits, as well as other relevant written promotional materials/formats.

Required Materials, textbook:

- Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques. 8th edition
Author: Dennis L. Wilcox, Bryan H. Reber
- The Associated Press Stylebook, any edition 2012 or later
- The PR Style Guide
Formats For Public Relations Practice, 3rd Edition
Author: Barbara Diggs-Brown

OPTIONAL:

- The New Rules of Marketing & PR, 5th Edition
Author: David Meerman Scott

Course Learning Objectives:

- Learn the diverse writing techniques used in a variety of public relations media
- Understand the diverse steps involved in the public relations writing process
- Write in a concise, factual, organized and persuasive manner
- Understand the strategic role public relations writing practices represent for all type of organizations
- Develop critical thinking, teamwork and strategic planning skills, as these are an integral part of the corporate communication/public relations field

Course Methodology:

- The course consists of a combination of lectures, discussions, individual/group projects and presentations
- Students will participate in diverse class projects that will demand the practical application of the theoretical concepts discussed in class
- Throughout the semester students will be required to demonstrate the skills and knowledge learned through the entire course by developing and presenting diverse public relations writing samples (news releases, media kits, etc.)

Learning Outcome:

- Competence in writing for different public relations media

Outcome Assessment/Grading:

- Students will demonstrate their skills and knowledge by successfully fulfilling the assignments required to pass this course.

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Grading:

Your final class grade will be an average of your scores in the following six categories.

Assignments and Possible Points:

1. Class participation/Attendance (individual)	100 points
2. Test (individual)	100 points
3. Quizzes (4) (individual)	400 points
4. Project Pitches (4) (individual)	400 points
5. Assignment #1 News Release (individual)	100 points
6. Assignment #2 Media Kits (team project)	100 points
7. Assignment #3 Video Project (team project)	100 points
8. Assignment #4 PR Program Project (team project)	100 points

Final Grade= Sum of scores (points earned for each assignment) divided by 8.

****Availability of any extra credit opportunities will be at the discretion of the instructor.****

Assignment Details:

- The test will cover the first chapters of the book to ensure the basics of public relations are clear.
- There will be four (4) quizzes to ensure comprehension of lecture material. These will be unannounced.
- Assignments #1-#4 will require pitches. Topics must be factual and approved; no duplications will be accepted.
- The written news release will cover an actual event for a local organization.
- The media kit, video and PR program are team projects and entail class presentations.

Each writing assignment, including the final, will be graded on a 1-100 scale based on the following criteria:

- Accuracy - 20
- Content - 20
- Organization - 20
- Application of writing style and concepts, AP Style - 20
- Grammar, spelling - 20

Total possible points per assignment: 100

Grading Scale

- 90 -100points = A
- 80 - 89points = B
- 70 - 79 points = C

60 - 69 points = D
59 or below = F

Class participation:

It is expected that students read the assigned material ahead of the coordinating class time and be ready to discuss chapter topic. Participation in class discussions is not optional. Be courteous to classmates by paying attention to presentations, questions and comments. Be open-minded in regard to the opinions and ideas of others.

Your responsibilities for the course:

- All written assignments can be hard copy or electronic, but **MUST** be turned in on time. **THIS MEANS BY 9 A.M. ON THE DUE DATE.** Use 12-point type, Times New Roman, Verdana, Tahoma or Arial font.
- Deadlines for all assignments will be strictly enforced. I won't accept assignments after deadline. Missing a deadline is equivalent of not doing the assignment. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for assignments due.
- Students are expected to attend each and every class and to be punctual.

Attendance will be taken each class at the start of class. Students that arrive after attendance is taken will be counted absent.

- Respect is expected. The use of cell phones and text messages won't be allowed during class time. Please turn cell phones to silent mode before entering the classroom. My biggest pet peeve is having someone in class that is "not present". Please pay attention in class.

A few words about Teamwork:

You will be required to work in teams for three assignments in the duration of the class. This provides the opportunity to experience work and projects in a close to real life environment. Teams will be required to overcome challenges sometimes encountered through the work dynamic – as a team. To assist, a team contract will be developed at the start of the semester and team agreements will accompany each team assignment to reflect each member's contribution.

Late Work Policy:

Late work will not be accepted except as arranged with the instructor on an individual basis and for serious reasons. It is the student's responsibility to keep up with assigned reading, activities and exams. Due dates are firm.

Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism & Cheating **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

If you need help writing, please visit the staff at the university writing center.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses. Plagiarism, cheating or collusion is a violation of the norms and ethics of the academic community. Anyone suspected of academic dishonesty will immediately be reported to the Chair of the Department of Communication and to the Dean of Student Affairs. Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated.

Plagiarism consists of submitting someone else's work, thoughts or ideas as your own without giving proper credit to the source. Cheating consists of obtaining information from someone other than the instructor during an exam. Most cases of

plagiarism are the result of incorrectly referencing and/or citing sources in research papers. Do not be a victim of ignorance. There are too many reference resources to help you avoid this embarrassing situation.

Disability Statement (American with/Disabilities Act [ADA])

UTEP offers a variety of services to persons with documented sensory, mental, physical, or temporary disabling conditions to promote success in classes. If you have a disability and believe you may need services, you are encouraged to contact the Center for Students with Disabilities to discuss your needs with a counselor. All discussions and documentation are kept confidential.

Tentative Course Schedule and Templates Attached.

(Instructor reserves the right to change the class schedule depending on the needs of the class and external factors.)

January

2017

COMM 3320

M, W 9-10:20 a.m.

Writing for Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday University Closed	17	18 Spring semester begins Class introductions, syllabus overview	19	20	21
22	23 Chapter 1: Getting organized for writing	24	25 [PR Pitch Due] Ch. 2: Becoming a persuasive writer	26	27	28
29	30 Chapter 3: Finding and making news	31				

February

2017

COMM 3320 M, W 9-10:20 a.m.

Writing for Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Chapter 4: Working with Journalists and Bloggers Spring Census Day	2	3	4
5	6 Crisis Communication	7	8 [Test] Chapter 5: Writing the News Release	9	10	11
12	13 Release Writing Practice [News Release]	14	15 Ch. 6: Preparing Fact Sheets, Advisories, Media Kits, and Pitches	16	17	18
19	20 Insight from the Media	21	22 Chapter 7: Creating Feature Content and Op-Eds	23	24	25
26	27 Chapter 8: Publicity Photos and Infographics	28				

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March

2017

COMM 3320

M, W 9-10:20 a.m.

Writing for Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6 Chapter 9: Radio, Television, and Online Video	7	8 Industry Insight	9	10	11
12	13 Spring Break No Class	14	15 Spring Break No Class	16	17	18
19	20 Chapter 10: Websites, Blogs and Podcasts	21	22 The New Rules of Marketing & PR	23	24	25
26	27 [Video Project Presentations]	28	29 Chapter 11: Social Media and Mobile Apps	30	31	

April

2017

COMM 3320

M, W 9-10:20 a.m.

Writing for Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3 Best Practices and Examples	4	5 Chapter 12: Intranets, Newsletters and Brochures	6	7	8
9	10 Ch. 13: Writing Email, Memos and Proposals	11	12 Ch. 14: Giving Speeches and Presentations	13	14	15
16	17 Ch. 15: Organizing Meetings and Events	18	19 Event Public Relations	20	21	22
23	24 [MEDIA KITS] Ch. 16: Using Direct Mail and Advertising	25	26 Ch. 17: Working with a Legal Framework	27	28	29
30						

May

2017

COMM 3320

M, W 9-10:20 a.m.

Writing for Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Ch. 18: Planning Programs and Campaigns	2	3 Ch. 19: Measuring Success	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 Final [Team Project Presentations] 10 a.m.- 12:45 p.m.	11	12	13 Spring Commencement
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

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