JMC 3423-004: Public Relations Writing

T/Th 10:30-11:45 a.m. | Aug. 23-Dec. 9 (Final: Dec. 12, 8-10) | Gaylord II, 1130

Office Location: 3510B Gaylord Hall

Office Hours: T/Th 1-2:30, and by appt.

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Course Description 3423

Public relations professionals deal with diverse audiences and multiple stakeholders. Public Relations Writing teaches you the basic principles associated with writing in an assortment of styles and to multiple publics. You will learn how to write specialized documents like backgrounders, brochures, business letters, pitch letters, infographics, and news releases. Æsthetics is a central focus of the class and you will learn the features of effective design and what design options exist. You will begin credentialing and portfolio building. AP style, sensitivity to cross cultural issues, multiple stakeholders and publics, and ethics, are emphasized.

One area of recent growth in public relations has been new technologies like blogs, Twitter, and Facebook. You will learn how to write for these technologies and how to get the most out of them for your organization or client.

Objectives

- To introduce students to more advanced writing activities, and to build on basic writing skills already learned.
- To instruct students how to create a variety of written documents.
- To enable students to understand the rhetorical aspects of the public relations writing process.
- To teach students an assortment of communication, public relations, persuasion, and rhetorical theories used to create effective written documents.
- To raise ethical issues associated with communicating with multiple publics.
- To learn about new technologies useful in public relations.
- To reinforce AP style.

Note Carefully: Learning to be an effective writer requires the assistance of an editor or "coach" who is willing to tell you what you need to do to improve your writing. Writing is a skill that takes years to hone. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of office hours and to come by and see me as often as you can. Even if all we do is talk about current events (I hate sports, we will not talk sports), I can get to know you and get a better feel for your strengths and weaknesses and how to make you a better writer. You can better understand what I expect on class assignments and how to do well. Come see me at least a few times throughout the semester.

Miscellaneous

- Come up with a method to help me remember your name.
- Spell-check your work! Having even one spelling error will result in a zero on the assignment.
- All readings should be completed for class on the date indicated.
- Late assignments will be discounted 10% per *calendar day*. After five days, they will not be accepted.
- <u>Assignments are due at the start of class</u>. Bring assignments to class printed and ready to go; do not attempt to print your work off before class begins unless you arrive very early. If you do not have an assignment ready, do not skip class! Come to class anyway and turn the assignment in later that day or the next day. The grade reduction will be the same. No need to miss any class.
- No assignment will be accepted via e-mail, except when noted in the assignment. In an emergency, or in the case of a late assignment, an e-mail version may be submitted to prove that your assignment was completed and in on time, however, a printed copy must be provided the next class day or the assignment will not be graded, and will begin losing points for being late. I will also compare the copies to ensure that you are submitting the final draft on time.
- All assignments should be printed (in color if appropriate), spell checked, and proofread.

- Come see me in office hours with questions or for feedback *before* assignments are due. Office hours are there for you; you pay for them so use them.
- Missed exams cannot be made up for any reason.
- Exams may only be taken early with prior permission.
- Familiarize yourself with Associated Press (AP) style and follow it for all assignments.

• NB: Having any spelling errors will result in a ZERO. Yes, I said this twice, it's important.

Required Texts (Plus readings distributed via Learn.OU.edu)

Christian, D., Jacobsen, S. & Minthorn, D. (Ed.) (2010). *The Associated Press stylebook and libel manual and briefing on media law with internet guide and glossary*. New York: Associated Press. ISBN: 0917360508. \$11.75 for the spiral bound book (recommended) or \$25 for online access.

Kent, M. L. (2011). *Public relations writing: A rhetorical approach*. Boston, Pearson/Allyn & Bacon. Bookstore.

Class Policies

Formatting and Writing Expectations

Do not lose sight of the big picture. Just because you are creating a document in *Photoshop* with an analysis memo, does not mean the memo is unimportant. Public relations is characterized by effective writing. As a result, professional writing standards are expected on all assignments. Professional standards include: correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and careful proofreading. No spelling errors are allowed. *Having even one spelling error will result in a zero for the assignment (even in 3433)*. Create your text in a word processing program, spell check it, and *then* place it into another document.

Most professional documents are intended to be "final draft," which means that they are single spaced, printed at smaller type sizes, etc. This syllabus, for example, is single-spaced, as are the textbooks for the class, brochures, newsletters, etc. When you are *preparing* text for a document, the manuscript is typed at a standard font size and is double-spaced to facilitate editing. Thus, written assignments like memos (with the exception of news releases which are *always* double-spaced), should include two copies of the assignment. One copy will be final draft quality, printed in color, etc., the other copy should have just the text, be double-spaced (27 lines-per-page), have one-inch margins all around, and be printed in Bookman or Bookman Old Style 11 pt (not 12 point).

Never use Times or Times New Roman, for any assignment. Times is difficult to read. I will not accept it, and your assignment may be late after I send you it back to be fixed.

Attendance Policy

In the business world, attendance is an important aspect of professionalism. Indeed, "just showing up" is sometimes the most important aspect of job performance and can mean the difference between a promotion or a layoff. You should make an effort to come to every class.

Oklahoma University's attendance policy reads as follows: "A student is responsible for the content of any course in which he or she is officially enrolled. The establishment of a specific policy concerning class attendance requirements, as well as announced and unannounced examinations, is the responsibility of the individual instructor." *In other words, having an attendance policy is the instructor's prerogative.* The Strategic Communication faculty endorse a strict attendance policy in order to provide continuity in classes and maximize the learning opportunities for all students.

You may miss one week of classes without penalty. If you miss a third class, your final grade will be reduced by 5%. Missing a fourth class will result in a 10% reduction of your final grade. Missing a fifth class will result in a failing grade for the course. There are no excused absences. Being sick, getting in an automobile accident, having your car break down, going on a job interview, attending an extracurricular event or conference, going to a funeral, getting arrested, etc., will not be excused. Coming late or leaving early 2 times equals an absence.

If you must miss class for a university-sanctioned event, please be prepared to make up the missed class during office hours. I *may* consider excusing non university-sanctioned events if they are rele-

vant to your academic major/minor, if you come see me at the beginning of the semester, and if you prepare a memo requesting release for the activity. The only activities officially excused by OU are Debate, and NCAA related events for staff, athletes, and other support staff. Go figure.

You do not have to ask permission to miss class, nor do you need an excuse—although providing one is a professional courtesy. Use your absences wisely.

Note: if you experience a death in the family or have a long-term or chronic illness (Mononucleosis, Pneumonia, Lyme disease, etc.) which prevents your from coming to class for more than seven to ten days, you are advised to drop the course. The registrar's office has a procedure for compensating students who experience serious illnesses, deaths in the family, etc. There is no reason to sacrifice your education and fail my class if you are ill, etc.

The only activities that I will excuse, besides religious holidays, are *academic* conferences (PRSSA, IABC, NCA, ICA, etc.) in our area, if you have a paper, and jury duty (and only if you are on a jury—some notice from the court will be required).

If you plan to miss a day because of a religious holiday, you should tell me early in the semester what day(s) you will miss. Prepare a one-page memo indicating the religious holidays and dates that you will miss. Notifying me the day *before*, or the day of, a religious holiday is unacceptable. All religions know the dates of religious holidays several weeks or months in advance.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the unauthorized or inappropriate use of the words or ideas of others. Plagiarism occurs when written or spoken material is borrowed (even from oneself), in whole or in part, and passed off as original by a writer or speaker. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, presenting someone else's ideas, speech, presentation, essay, book review, or news release as original. Plagiarism also includes failing to document or cite the source of word-for-word or paraphrased material in oral presentations or written assignments. It is my policy to pursue plagiarism vigorously, to fail students who plagiarize for the entire class, and to report cases of plagiarism to the university administration.

The University is an academic community of scholars. Academic dishonesty is a very serious offense against the integrity of this community and will not be tolerated. All academic work submitted by you is assumed to be your own *original work* and to contain your own thought, research, and self-expression. Work that borrows the ideas, organization, or wording, from others must be properly acknowledged. Similarly, work that was conducted for another class should not be passed off as original.

Additionally, anytime a student or professional attempts to deceive another by pretending to do work, or take credit for work that s/he did not actually complete, including changing the font size or style, triple spacing, claiming to have submitted an assignment on time that the professor must have "lost" etc., s/he is engaging in academic dishonesty or "cheating." What you are attempting to do is no different than copying from someone else's test. The consequences of this will be just as serious as plagiarism.

NB: Many students are caught each semester and failed for plagiarism. If even one student in one hundred cheats, the number is too high. As you all know, the number is much higher than that. For students planning to graduate, plagiarizing an assignment is quite possibly the stupidest thing they could do. Do not engage in plagiarism in any form. If you are ever unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, ask me or someone else in the department. At the very least, send an e-mail out to me at two in the morning with your question to CYA and explain what you will do to try to be accurate with your citations. When you enter the business world, plagiarism will not only get you fired, but also may ruin your career and get you sued, depending upon what ideas/content you steal.

There is a very simple rule to follow in order to avoid plagiarism and never get in trouble. *Cite everything that is not your own words or idea.* If you know that someone else said it, wrote it, or thought it, anywhere, even someone at a party, cite the source. Do this and you will never get in trouble for plagiarism.

† **NB:** I will give you 5% extra credit on your final grade for turning in someone who cheats. You'll obviously need a bit more than just the claim, but any evidence that can be verified or followed up on will be sufficient and as long as it is possible, your name would never be mentioned.

OU'S ACADEMIC DISHONESTY STATEMENT

All work submitted for this course must be your work. All sources used for information must be properly cited. Students should adhere to the *A Student's Guide to Academic Integrity* as defined by the office of the Senior Vice President and Provost at www.ou.edu/provost/pronew/content/integritymenu. html:

"Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication and fraud. *Cheating* is "the use of unauthorized materials, methods, or information in any academic exercise, including improper collaboration." *Plagiarism* is "the representation of the words and ideas of another as one's own." Examples include: excluding others or claiming the work of others as one's own; presentation of the same material as original in more than one publication; inclusion of individuals as authors who have not made a definite contribution to the work published, and submission of multi-authored publications without the concurrence of all authors." *Fabrication* includes "the falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise." *Fraud* includes "the falsification, forgery, or misrepresentation of academic work, including the resubmission of work performed in one class for credit in another class" (OU Faculty Handbook, 2005).

School Closings, Swine Flu, School Crises, etc.

Since school closing because of illness or weather are essentially unpredictable, my grading policy is as follows: If school is cancelled or delayed beyond the end of the normal semester for whatever reason, weather, crisis, disease outbreak, terrorism, etc., your final grade will be based on whatever work you had submitted up to the time of the closure announcement. Any late work that is not in by the closure date will not be factored into your grade. However, work due on the day of the closure may be submitted electronically until midnight. In other words, be sure to do your best on every assignment.

Diversity and Ethics Policy

The University of Oklahoma and the Gaylord College respect diversity in all of its forms: race, sex, gender, age, religion, political orientation, country of origin, economic status, etc. Everyone in the United States has a right to their opinion and should feel comfortable expressing their opinion. As citizens, we are under no obligation to agree with what others believe, however, we must, as a civil society, support people's right to worship, act, look, and think, as they want. In this classroom, we will not tolerate any mistreatment of others because of how they look, what they believe, where they come from, or because of a lack of knowledge or skills. The only thing that we will not be tolerant of is a lack of ethical and moral fiber. As Donald M. Erb wrote:

"Do not be tolerant of misrepresentation, of superficiality, of the parading of false issues as though they were real issues. Tolerance does not extend to intellectual dishonesty or ineptitude."

Plaque in the Erb Memorial Union, Univ. of Oregon, 1990

Technology Policy

I taught a professional Master's course in Prague a few years ago in which I had the Iranian "Charge D'Affaires," Hossein Rezvani, essentially the Ambassador to the Czech Republic, in my class. At the beginning of class, Rezvani would turn off his cell phone, as would every student. More recently, while lecturing in Virginia to the U.S. Defense Information School (DINFOS), every officer in the class (Captains, Majors, Colonials, etc.) turned off his/her cellular telephone before class started. When I attend professional meetings and conferences with leaders in business and communication, professionals also turn off their telephones. Ambassadors, military officers, and professional communicators are more important than you and I are, and yet, they respectfully turn off their cell phones during classes and professional meetings. Since you all want to be professionals some day, you should behave as one now. If you want to know the time, buy a watch, but do not use your cellular telephone as a clock, do not check your messages during class, and be sure that your telephone is turned off before class.

E-mail and Communication Policy

I check e-mail regularly each weekday and once each weekend day (sometimes more frequently). You should treat any e-mail to me as a professional correspondence. All communication should include your name, your class, and a clear, professionally worded, message.

Grade Questions Policy

If you have concerns about a grade, I expect you to explain your question in writing (memo form). Please outline your concern and provide evidence to support your claim (e.g., "On p. 65 of the textbook it says...." or "On the assignment sheet you said we should..."). You need to wait 24-hours before inquiring about any exam grade.

Assignments and Descriptions JMC 3223-004: Public Relations Writing

Assignments (Writing)	Points
Your Choice I (up to three, total of 20%)	%
Your Choice II	%
Your Choice III	%
Group Presentation on Social Media w/ Visual Aids & handouts (different doc.s) (topic assigned)	10%
Feature Story: 2,500 words (three drafts: 0/5/5) (topic assigned)	10%
New Technology White Paper: (topic assigned)	10%
Online Media Kit: (URL Sample/Photos/Cover Letter/2 News Releases/Fact Sheet/Backgrounder (0/10/1	5%) 25%
Exam I (format and content TBA)	10%
Exam II (format and content TBA)	10%
Exam III (Take-home: format and content TBA)	10%
Extra Credit: (XC) (Questions on readings—in memo form 1 p. ss.; added value; blog entry) †	0–5%
Total 10	00-110%

[†] Questions on readings should take the form of requests for clarification or elaboration, identifying links to other courses, theories, and communication principles, etc. not exam questions. Critical thinking questions are what I want to see. Added Value involves you finding articles, materials, etc. that you bring in to share with your fellow students. You act as a resource for information. Distributing a PDF to everyone is an example of this. Blog entries must be substantive commentaries on public relations or communication issues. Reposting other people's content is not a blog entry you can receive credit for. You need to write something. Each of these options will be worth about .5% on your final grade. Do something every third class and you can get full credit for this. "Getting inspired": If you get so psyched about something that you want to talk about it, put together a handout and some notes from what you have read and come in the next day prepared to stand up front with me and cover the material.



All reading due for the date indicated				
DATE	DAY	ACTIVITY/READING ASSIGNMENT DUE		
Aug. 23	1	Overview Introductions Syllabus		
Aug. 25	2	Read: TBA		
Aug. 30	3	Read: Kent: Preface & Ch. 1: Introduction		
Sep. 1	4	Activities		
Sep. 6	5	Read: Kent: Ch. 2: Rhetoric		
Sep. 8	6	Activities		
Sep. 3	7	Read: Kent: Ch. 3 Editing/Proofing		
Sep. 15	8	Activities		
Sep. 20	9	Read: Kent: Ch. 4 Aesthetics		
Sep. 22	10	Activities		
Sep. 27	11	Read: Kent: Ch. 5 Writing for Print, Broadcast, Web		
Sep. 29	12	Exam I		
Oct. 4	13	Read: Kent: Ch. 6 Persuasion		
Oct. 6	14	Activities		
Oct. 11	15	Read: Kent: Ch. 7 Basics of Research		
Oct. 13	16	Activities		
Oct. 18	17	Read: Kent: Ch. 8 Research Technology		
Oct. 20	18	Activities		
Oct. 25	19	Read: Kent: Ch. 9 Speeches/Presentations		
Oct. 27	20	Activities		
Nov. 1	21	Read: Kent: Ch. 10 Dialogue		
Nov. 3	22	Activities		
Nov. 8	23	Read: Kent: Ch. 11 International/Intercultural		
Nov. 10	24	Exam II		
Nov. 15	25	NCA I will be away. I will arrange a guest lecturer one of the two days: TBA. Use the time wisely.		
Nov. 17	26	NCA I will be away. I will arrange a guest lecturer one of the two days: TBA. Use the time wisely.		
Nov. 22	27	Read: Kent: Ch. 12 Software		
Nov. 24	28	Thanksgiving 23-27		
Nov. 29	29	Read: Kent: Ch. 13 Ethics/Regulatory Feature Story Final		
Dec. 1	30	Activities		
Dec. 6	31	Activities		
Dec. 8	32	Activities		
Dec. 12:]	Final Exam Day Exam III Due (take-home) GOJF Rewrites		

Your Choice (you must contract for 15–20% of your final grade)

Examine the list of Writing Activities (below), or identify one of your own from some document you have seen and I can assign it points. You must select one to three additional assignments that you believe will make the class more valuable to you. Fill in the name or a brief description of the assignment that you want to write and the possible points (see contract on the last page of the syllabus). Note: bigger and complex assignments may be done for fewer points (I will adjust what you do) or simpler assignments may be done for more points. The points are just intended to give you a general idea of what each assignment requires in terms of work.

Exams

Two exams will be traditional, in-class, exams based on class readings and lectures. To do well you need to have done your readings as well as come to class. I will provide a study guide if you want one—remind me a week ahead of time. The third exam will be a take-home exam, which will involve my giving you a list of several documents that you will create.

Feature Story

You will write a 2,500-word feature story—topic to be assigned. Manuscript to be prepared according to AP style (plain text, double-spaced, no italics, no underlining, no bolding, etc.).

Topics:

1: Online Publishing Issues2: Recent research by Kulemeka3: Recent research by Pritchard4: The Complexities of Blogging5: Recent research by Tsetsura6: Group Think is Alive and Well7: PowerPoint is a Tool of the Devil8: Recent research by Taylor9: The Value of a Public Relations Agency10: The strength of weak ties11: Recent research by Kent12: The Wild West of E-Publishing

Group Presentation Critique of Social Media (25-30 minutes + questions, w/ VAs & handouts-both are different)

Each group will give a 25–30 minute presentation (with visual aids and handouts) on one social media issue. My Graduate class that follows ours will be in attendance and participate in the Q&A. The goal of the presentation is to for the audience to both walk away understanding the social media topic assigned, as well as understanding how to make the most of the social media from the standpoint of an organization or client. For example, my cat can tweet. Knowing *how* to use Twitter on behalf of a client involves a lot more than simply posting short messages. Questions like "When should you post?" "For whom are you posting?" "When should you *not* post?" Why are you posting?" etc. should be addressed. Presentation handouts must also include an annotated bibliography of scholarly sources—3–5 per group member.

Relevant Research from PEW Internet; The Power of Blogs in Research; Issues in Online Privacy for Public Relations

Media Kit

You will create an online media kit that includes the following: a 1-page (500–1,000 word) Cover Letter, two 5-7-paragraph News Releases, one 3–5 page Fact Sheet, one 2–3 page Backgrounder, and fifty images. You must also include a two-page memo that explains why you selected the online media kit format that you did, as well as samples from actual online media kits showing what you have in mind. Explain in your memo any special design considerations (images, backgrounds, symbols, navigation cues, etc.), and why the design that you selected would be a compelling choice given your organization. Your materials should be prepared according to AP style, but include any special formatting intended for the final documents (bold, italics, serif/sanserif, typefaces, etc.). Details on organization TBA.

New Technology White Paper

A white paper or research paper presents facts related to a particular issue. That is, you make an argument or take a position, and support your claims by citing research. Alternatively, another kind of white paper (not what you are doing) is like a fact sheet, explaining how to do something. This is not a "how to" white paper. For this assignment you need to do some research and learn about the technology that you are assigned. You will write a 7–9 pages of text, double-spaced. You will also include a single spaced version of the paper that includes images, a creative cover page, etc. (after you have your 7–9 pages of text). This is a research assignment. The general expectation of a research paper is one source (not citation) per page. Thus, I expect to see at lease 7–9 scholarly sources (not magazines, newspapers, blogs, websites, Wikipedia, etc.).

Technologies/Social Media (assigned by me):

 1: Social Networking
 2: Potential/Value of Apps.
 3: Online Anonymity (e.g. Tor)

 4: Technopoly
 5: Knowledge Networks
 6: Alternative Presentation Software (e.g., Prezi)

 7: Podcasting
 8: Live Video Conferencing
 9: Collaborative Writing/Editing (ShowDocument)

 10: Online Privacy
 11: Collaborative Communities (e.g., citeulike.org)
 12: Dialogue & Tech. in Public Relations

Sample Points for Writing Activities

- 1. News release (basic 5-7¶ release): 5%
- 2. Backgrounder: 5–10%
- 3. Letter (cover, fundraising, invitation, information gathering, pitch, recommendation, solicitation, thank you, etc.): 5%
- 4. Fliers (tent signs, name badges, event signs, etc.): 5%
- 5. Advertising copy (more than a few sentences, like an issue advertisement): 5%
- 6. Design a poster, banner, billboard, transit sign, advertisement, etc.: 5%
- 7. Write a series of PSAs (10, 20, 30, 60 second): 5%
- 8. Write a memo: 5%
- 9. Pamphlet: 5-10%
- 10. Create/design infographics: 5-10%
- 11. Create/design stationery/business cards: 5-15%
- 12. Crate/design a Bulletin/Program: 5-10%
- 13. Meet/Interview community leaders, government officials, journalists, politicians, professionals/experts, etc.: 5–20% (depending upon how many)
- 14. Design a direct mail package: 5–10%
- 15. Take photographs, or oversee a commission for an illustration or artwork: 5-10%
- 16. Write a feature story: 10%
- 17. Create a fact sheet: 10%
- 18. Organize a speakers bureau or ongoing event (Blog, Web site, etc.): 10%
- 19. Write/create a brochure: 10-15%
- 20. Write or deliver a speech or presentation: 5–20% (see below)
- 21. Write a report: 5–20%.
- 22. Write a white paper or research paper (position paper): 10-20%
- 23. Editing/proofreading: 5-20%
- 24. Design a point-of-purchase display: 5–10%
- 25. Developing/creating media and informational kits: 5–10%
- 26. Design/create an online portfolio, website, chat room, knowledge network, etc.: 5-20%
- 27. Write content for, create/design, etc., a newsletter: 5-20%
- 28. Plan a news conference or special event: 10-20%
- 29. Research for a campaign, etc.: 5–20%

Speeches

- Biography: 10–20%
- Debate: 10–20%
- Demonstration: 10%
- Informative: 5–20%
- Persuasion: 10–25%
- Persuasive sales: 10-20%
- Special occasion (introduction, motivational, celebration, memorial, eulogy, etc.): 5–20%







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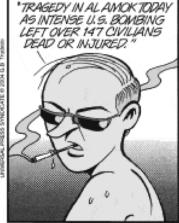






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Get Out of Jail Free

This coupon entitles the bearer to one of the following and must be submitted by the student to be activated.

Check Box:

- □ Eliminate or reduce a late penalty on *one* written assignment (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- □ Eliminate or reduce a time penalty on *one* speech/presentation (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- □ Rewrite *one* assignment (not already a 90% or above) within one week of it being returned.
- □ Make a "deal" with the instructor:



Request (be Specific)

This card may not be used to:

- Change the date or time of an exam.
- Obtain a makeup exam.
- Obtain additional absences.
- Eliminate an attendance penalty.
- Eliminate a late-to/early-from class penalty.
- Receive credit for work done in another class.

This offer is subject to change without notice. Coupons must be redeemed at the time of use. This offer is non-transferable and carries no cash value. This offer does not apply to class penalties not listed in this document. The professor reserves the right to revoke this coupon at any time. Void where prohibited by law.

	Name (print)
	Signature
-	Date

Contract	Assignments: JMC 3423: Public Relations Writing		
Assignment	Points		
Your Choice 1:	%		
Your Choice 2:	%		
Your Choice 3:	%		
White Paper	10%		
Group Presentation	10%		
Feature Story	10%		
Media Kit:	25%		
Exam I	10%		
Exam II	10%		
Exam III	10%		
Extra Credit	0–5%		
Total†% †: (Note: total must equal 100–110%) (Select 1-3 additional writing assignments that are worth 15–20%)			
	Full Name (print), as per attendance sheet Signature		
	Date		