



**PUR4100: Public Relations Writing  
(Section 4072)  
Fall 2024**

**Instructor:** Gregory Davis

**Location:** Weimer 3024

**Class Times:** Monday and Wednesdays, 6:15 – 8:10 p.m.

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**Office Hours:** Weimer 3024, Mondays and Wednesdays, from 8:10 – 9:10 p.m.

**Prerequisites:**

To enroll in this course, you must have completed and received a grade of C or better in PUR3000 (Principles of Public Relations) and JOU3101 (Reporting).

**Course Overview:**

This course is designed to provide students with the essential skills and knowledge required for effective public relations and mass communication.

As public relations practitioners, you will face several challenges throughout your careers, whether working on a short deadline, managing crises, or working with someone who counters your ideas.

Through these adversities, you will always be required to present your concepts and strategies in written form, and it is imperative that students learn to write well and professionally convey their message. As a cornerstone of strategic communication, writing is a fundamental tool that shapes public perception, builds relationships, and enhances organizational reputation. This course will empower students to become adept and versatile communicators through various forms of media.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Develop a Foundation in Public Relations Writing
  - Understand the principles and fundamentals of public relations writing.
  - Explore the role of written communication in building and maintaining organizational reputation.
  - Acquire a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of public relations.
2. Mastering Core Writing Styles in Public Relations
  - Develop proficiency in crafting media releases, media kits, speeches, proposals, strategic communications plans, and other essential writing techniques covered in this course.
  - Understand the nuances of adapting writing styles for various platforms.
3. Crisis Communication and Issue Management
  - Analyze case studies of crisis communication and develop effective crisis communication strategies utilizing critical thinking.
  - Craft messages that mitigate reputational damage during crisis situations.

- Understand the importance of proactive issue management through strategic writing.
4. Social Media and Online Reputation Management
    - Explore the role of social media in public relations.
    - Develop skills in crafting engaging and effective content for social platforms.
    - Understand strategies for managing and enhancing online reputation.
  5. Media Relations and Pitching
    - Learn how to write compelling pitches and press material to secure media coverage.
    - Understand the dynamics of building and maintaining relationships with journalists.
    - Develop effective strategies for leveraging media relations to enhance organizational visibility.
  6. Audience Analysis and Target Messaging
    - Explore technique for conducting audience analysis in public relations writing.
    - Develop the ability to tailor messages to diverse audiences.
    - Understand the importance of audience segmentation in crafting impactful communication.
  7. Measuring and Evaluating Public Relations Writing Effectiveness
    - Utilizing and learning the importance of research, planning, implementation, and evaluating your public relations writing.
    - Understand key performance indicators for written communication.
    - Develop skills in analyzing and interpreting data for communication strategies.
  8. Ethics and Professionalism
    - Understanding the importance of transparency, honesty, and integrity in the communications field.
    - Explore the role of public relations practitioners in upholding ethical standards within the industry.
  9. Presentation Skills
    - Develop presentation skills to effectively communicate and defend communication strategies.
    - Prepare for real-world scenarios by participating in mock pitches and client presentations.
  10. Portfolio Development
    - Build an online presence and compile a professional portfolio of diverse public relations writing samples.

**College of Journalism and Communications Objectives:**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:

- apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located.
- demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.

- demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences, and purposes they serve.
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity.
- apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

### **AP Style and Formatting:**

As public relations practitioners, you will be expected to understand and follow the Associated Press writing style. As such, all your work for this course will be held to AP style guidelines. While an AP Style book is not required in the course, it is highly recommended. There are resources online that can also be used to reference AP Style.

Your writing will also be free of grammatical and factual errors. Points will be deducted accordingly on every assignment in this class for grammatical, punctuation, capitalization, formatting, AP Style, and factual errors.

### **Course Professionalism:**

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school, and professional etiquette is always expected. I expect you to adhere to workplace norms of collegial and respectful interactions. I will adhere to the same.

Students will conduct themselves in an honest, ethical, and courteous manner with other students and the instructor, abiding by the UF Student Conduct and Honor Codes.

Students are expected to:

- Arrive on time and remain in class for its entire duration unless the instructor allows for early departure, or the student's individual departure or absence was discussed ahead of time with the instructor.
- Not speak when another student or the instructor is speaking.
- Not use cell phones, laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices except for in-class assignments.
- Welcome and respect the diverse opinions of your peers, instructors, and guests.

Violations of these expectations may result in students being asked to leave the classroom and/or lowering their grade

### **Attendance and Participation:**

This course is meant to mimic the standards of the professional world; thus, being late or missing class can reflect negatively on your overall job performance. Reliability is HUGE in this career field.

Due to this, attendance will be graded. Starting at 100, students will lose 10 points toward their overall attendance grade for every unexcused absence. If a situation occurs where you will not be able to attend class, please let me know ahead of time. Letting me know after the event (unless there are extreme situations) will result in your grade still being lowered. Showing up to class late on multiple occasions can also drop your attendance grade.

If you have an unexcused absence, please do not ask me to review the material I covered in class while you were out. Speak with your peers in the class and coordinate appropriately.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

### **Academic Honesty:**

The work you submit for this course must be your own. It must be original for this course.

Without attribution, you must never use direct or paraphrased material from any source, including websites. Attribution means citing the source of your facts within the text. Ideas that come from others must be credited.

You may not submit anything you wrote for a prior class, organization, or institution. You may not submit anything that was written for any purpose other than the given assignment.

I will handle any incident of academic dishonesty in accordance with the University of Florida policies that address cheating and unethical academic behavior, specifically the UF Honor Code and the Academic Honesty Guidelines.

Any time you complete an assignment for this course, you will clearly attribute the source of your information. You cannot copy anything word for word, regardless of the source, without putting quotes around it and citing the source.

For this class, we will use the MLA in-text citation method. You must also list your sources in a bibliography.

### **AI Policy for Student Work:**

AI is commonly used in the profession, so familiarity with generative AI tools is important. However, do not let your creative thinking and editing skills lapse! When AI is allowed or encouraged in assignments, you will need to document how AI was used. This could include providing your original prompts, showing the editing that you did to the created content, or using appropriate citation of information obtained via generative AI. If you are using AI when not explicitly allowed, that is considered a violation of the honor code as you are presenting content as your own that was not fully created by you. There are various AI detection tools available (built within Canvas and externally such as ZeroGPT), and many AI platforms follow very formulaic response patterns. If I am concerned that your work is not your own, I will try to verify the originality of your work. If unable to do so, I may ask you to resubmit the assignment detailing how you arrived at your submission.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Students requesting classroom accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

### **Late Assignments:**

In this profession, it is crucial to meet your deadlines. While I understand the stress of being a student, it is your responsibility to turn your assignments in on time. If you have a conflict, please contact me 24 hours or more before the deadline. If you have an emergency, be prepared to provide documentation.

If you ultimately forget or miss an assignment, 10 points will be deducted per day. That means if an assignment is due on Monday at 11:59 p.m. and you turn it in at midnight Tuesday morning, the highest grade you can receive on that assignment is a 90. You will receive a zero once an assignment reaches day five without being turned in (your strategic communication plan **must** be turned in by deadline or you will receive a zero for that assignment).

### **Grading Scale:**

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

- A 90 – 100 percent
- B 80 – 89 percent
- C 70 – 79 percent
- D 60 – 69 percent
- F 0 – 59 percent

### **Attendance**

**5 Points**

Attendance will be graded and counts toward five percent of your final grade. As mentioned above, you will start with 100 points in this category and lose 10 points for every unexcused absence. For more information, read the above “Attendance and Participation” section.

### **Class Participation**

**10 Points**

Class participation counts toward 10 percent of your final grade. A student looking to maximize this category will be engaged and present while in lecture. Class participation can count as participating in classroom discussions, providing constructive feedback to your peers, and in-class assignments.

### **Writing Assignments and Speech Presentation**

**45 Points**

There are 11 writing assignments and one speech presentation on which you will be graded in this course. This will count toward 45 percent of your grade. The week that the assignments are due is in the “Course Schedule” section of this syllabus, while specific due dates will be announced in class and located on Canvas.

### **Personal Branding**

**10 Points**

Social media is a crucial part of public relations and communications in general. More specifically, personal branding will set you apart from your peers and create networking and job opportunities for yourself in the real world. While announced in the first week, you will be required to have a completed and professional LinkedIn account beginning in week four.

For your LinkedIn, you will be required to:

- Have an up-to-date, completely filled-out profile.
- A professional profile photo and cover photo.
- Connect with your professor and your classmates.
- Post from week four and forward one post a week about a professional activity you have completed that week in terms of communications, complete with hashtags and photo(s).
  - These posts should be free of grammatical, punctuation, and factual errors.
- Attempt to connect with communication professionals throughout the semester.

Based on these requirements and your social activity at the end of the semester, your profile will count toward 10 points of your final grade.

### **Strategic Communications Plan**

**30 Percent**

At the beginning of the semester, you will select a client to work with and submit a communications proposal. Throughout the course, you will develop the components needed to create your strategic communications plan, which we will focus on during the last four weeks of the course. At the end of the semester, you will submit a final strategic communications plan for your client through Canvas and lead a 10-minute presentation of your plan to your peers in the final two weeks. This assignment as a whole will count toward 30 percent of your final grade.

### **Guidelines for Grading**

I will grade all your assignments on a 100-point scale. I will award points based on your demonstrated understanding of the assignment, creativity level, and ability to write compelling, accurate, and precise copy.

Students looking to receive an “A” on their assignments will produce work that is well- formatted, consistent with messaging, and utilize knowledge provided in the lecture. The assignments you turn in should always be free of factual errors, be written in AP Style, and have appropriate citations.

I will automatically deduct two points per error on your assignments for the following:

- Grammatical, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization errors
- AP Style errors
- Bad formatting

I will automatically deduct 10 points per error on your assignments for the following:

- Fact errors
- Missing citations

Assignments will receive a zero if:

- They are more than five days late (your strategic communications plan is the exception, it must be turned in on the due date, or you will receive a zero for the assignment)
- They are plagiarized (reused materials from previous courses/jobs, utilize artificial intelligence, do not include appropriate citation)

### **Course Schedule:**

The following course schedule serves as a guide for the semester, though dates and assignments are subject to change. All changes will be sent through Canvas as announcements.

- **Week 1: Understanding Your Audience**
  - Assignment Due: Client Selection Form
- **Week 2: R.P.I.E. and Effective Communication**
  - Sept. 2 – Labor Day (No Class)
  - Assignment Due: Communications Proposal
- **Week 3: Communication Plans and Messaging Strategy**
  - Assignment Due: Messaging Strategy
- **Week 4: Social Media and Media Releases**
  - Assignment Due: Media Release and Boilerplate
- **Week 5: Community Engagement and Media Kits**
  - Assignment Due: Fact Sheet
- **Week 6: Professional Development and Branding**
  - Assignment Due: Communications Audit
- **Week 7: Campaigns and Networking**
  - Assignment Due: Campaign Pitch
- **Week 8: Public Speaking and Speech Writing**
  - Assignment Due: Speech Memo and Q&A
- **Week 9: Speech Presentations**
  - Presentations in Class
- **Week 10: Marketing, Advertising, and Creative Multimedia**
  - Assignment Due: Creative Brief
- **Week 11: Strategic Communications Plan**
- **Week 12: Crisis Communication and Evaluations**
  - Nov. 11 – Veterans Day (No Class)
  - Assignment Due: Measuring Objectives
- **Week 13: Resumes and Cover Letters**
  - Assignment Due: Resume and Cover Letter
- **Week 14: Thanksgiving Break**
  - Nov. 25 – No Class
  - Nov. 27 – No Class
- **Week 15: Strategic Communications Plan Presentations**
  - Assignment Due: Final Strategic Communications Plan