Public Relations Writing, Spring 2025
PUR4443, section 1558, Weimer Hall 3028
9:35 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays

Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Frazer
Office: Weimer Hall 2066B
Office hours: To be announced at beginning of semester
Email: r.frazer@ufl.edu (Email is the best way to reach me when I'm not in my office. Please allow 36 hours for a response, excluding weekends and holidays.)
Office Phone: (352)-392-3081

Course description and goals:
Public relations professionals must be strong, polished writers who can work quickly and adapt to changing environments and needs. Students must recognize the importance of excellent writing for success in both the public relations profession and day-to-day business. In this course, you will master the core qualities of excellent public relations writing and develop the skills to build communications materials for real clients.

This course is centered on you and your needs. As such, the course will provide the opportunity for hands-on learning and real-world applications to help you gain experience and build a robust portfolio that showcases your strategic writing skills.

Course objectives:
Students will master the basic writing skills of public relations professionals to prepare them to meet the demands of today's industry. Upon completing this class, students will learn to:
- Recognize the importance of excellent writing for success in both the public relations profession and day-to-day business;
- Write clear, concise, compelling, accurate and logically organized materials and content, following style and grammar rules;
- Develop public relations materials (such as key messages, backgrounders, media briefs, media lists, etc.) that effectively and strategically meet your public relations objectives;
- Explain the purpose of such public relations materials and decide when and how to strategically use these;
- Tailor communications – including content, style and format – based on your target audiences and public relations objectives;
- Develop and apply critical thinking, listening and professional skills through assignments that mimic industry work with clients and peers.

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.

CLASS LOGISTICS

Deadlines

Unless stated otherwise in the assignment description on Canvas, all written assignments **must** be submitted **to Canvas,** in word (.doc, .docx) or .pdf format, by the assigned deadline unless otherwise stated.

***NOTE: Only assignments submitted
    1) through Canvas AND
    2) before the assigned deadline AND
    3) in .doc, .docx, or PDF file format
will be accepted and graded. Assignments not conforming to the above guidelines may be given a grade of 0.***

Unless I determine that an extenuating circumstance has occurred (per university guidelines regarding reasons for failure to engage in class), submissions emailed to me after the Canvas submission box has closed will not be graded. **It is your responsibility to not wait until the last minute** to finish assignments, in order to avoid technical problems such as spotty internet connections, computer crashes, etc. that may interfere with timely submission.

If submission of your assignment is delayed because of technical issues with Canvas, please report the problem immediately, receive a ticket number from the UF Computing Help Desk and email it to me immediately. The ticket will document the time and date of your issue.

For technical issues related to Canvas, contact the UF Help Desk at http://helpdesk.ufl.edu or (352) 392-HELP (4357).

Course technology

You will need reliable Internet access and a reliable computer with Microsoft Word (or other word processing software that can generate a .doc or .docx file), Adobe flash (for viewing video content) and Adobe PDF reader. Please bring your computer or tablet to class.

Class attendance

Attendance is important to student success in this class. That said, absences happen, and it is the student's responsibility to communicate with the instructor regarding absences in order to maintain their standing/progress in this course. Please carefully read the policies below regarding the two different types of absences (excused and unexcused):

Excused Absences: I follow the university's guidelines regarding student absences that are excusable (i.e., absences that will not result in a penalty to the student's grade). Please read these guidelines carefully to note what types of absences can be excused. Examples of excusable absences include health emergencies, required university athletics participation, and religious holidays. Please note that for such an absence to be excused by the instructor, the student **must provide prior written (or email) notice to the instructor prior to the event whenever possible.** In the event of an unexpected emergency, the student must notify the instructor of the reason for their absence in a timely manner as soon as the emergency has passed. A student may not wait until weeks after a crisis or illness has passed to contact the instructor about excusing absences or making up missed work; I will not honor such requests. The instructor reserves the right to request supporting documentation for excused absences as appropriate.

Unexcused Absences: A student may miss up to two classes for reasons not covered in the "excused absences" policy without a penalty to their grade at the end of the course. However, the instructor is not responsible for providing the students with notes or class recordings for unexcused absences, nor may the student make up in-class activities that might occur when they are absent. If a student misses more than two classes (unexcused), each additional absence will result in a 5% grade reduction in their overall class grade.

Class Professionalism and Participation

Please be on time to class. Please do not text, check email or social media unrelated to the class, browse unrelated websites, or do other work during class. Please be collegial and respectful in your interactions with your fellow students, and welcome and treat with respect the different perspectives of others. Threats, profanity directed at others, personal attacks, discriminatory slurs, etc. are never appropriate in any type of class communication.

Additionally, the following behaviors may result in a penalty assessed to your grade.
- Persistent tardiness or regularly leaving class early without prior permission.
- Failure to actively participate in class activities.
- Inattentiveness in class (e.g., texting, checking social media/email, sleeping, etc.).
- Disrespectful or unprofessional behavior or communication with the instructor or peers.

The instructor will warn any student of a potential participation penalty prior to implementing the penalty, in order to give the student the opportunity to correct their behavior and avoid a grade reduction.

Class-related notifications

Please log in to Canvas daily to check for class-related announcements. You may set up alerts to forward messages directly to your UF email address. To adjust your notification settings in Canvas, follow these guidelines.

Grading

Here's how the grading will be weighted (note: assignment details are tentative and subject to change):

Assignment Summaries (Details Provided on Canvas)	Due Dates	Points / %
In-class Writing Activities and Pop Quizzes	TBA – see Canvas	20 pts / 10%
Out-of-class Writing Assignments • Memo • Blog/Narrative Article • Op-ed • Social Media Content • News Release + Pitch Letter • Press Kit	TBA – see Canvas	50 pts / 20%
Exams (3) • Taken in class, closed note/book	February 6th, March 13th, April 17th	30 pts / 30%
TOTAL		100 pts / 100%

Grading scale [For more information, please see the university's policy on <u>grades and grading</u>.]

A = 93 - 100%
A- = 90 - 92.99%
B+ = 87 - 89.99%
B = 83 - 86.99%
B- = 80 - 82.99%
C+ = 77 - 79.99%
C = 73 - 76.99%
C- = 70 - 72.99%
D+ = 67 - 69.99%
D = 63 - 66.99%
D- = 60 - 62.99%
E = below 60%

[Note: Grade penalties may be assessed for attendance and participation violations; please see sections above on class attendance and class participation/professionalism.]

Students with disabilities
Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Academic honesty
UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'" The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Read the Honor Code <u>here</u>. You are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask me.

Plagiarism
The Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code states that "A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
- Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
- Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
- Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author."

In every assignment for this course, you must clearly attribute the source of your information,

including information obtained from organizations' web sites or internal documents. You cannot copy anything word for word, regardless of the source, without putting quotes around it and crediting the source.

Use of Generative AI
In this class I want you to produce all your own work. Unless explicitly stated in the assignment description, the only appropriate use of generative AI without citation in this course is for spelling and grammar check purposes. Any other use of generative AI's assistance must be clearly cited within your work. No direct quotes from generative AI may be used, and any summary or paraphrasing of ideas generated by AI must be clearly cited as such. It is important for me to be able to ascertain what you know and can produce unaided on your own. The use of generative AI for your assignments in this class that do not conform to the standards just detailed is 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, and if evidence is found that your work is AI generated, I will submit your assignment as violating the honor code.

Course evaluation
Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.

Recording of class
Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule may change as the semester progresses to reflect the progress and needs of the class. Last updated 12/23/2024.

UNIT 1: Fundamentals of PR Writing (Style, Grammar, Professionalism)

Week 1 (Tue, Jan 14th and Thurs, Jan 16th)

Week 2 (Tue, Jan 21st and Thurs, Jan 23rd)

UNIT 2: Internal Communications (Memos, Reports, Newsletters)

Week 3 (Tue, Jan 28th and Thurs, Jan 30th)

Week 4 (Tue, Feb 4th and Thurs, Feb 6th)

Exam 1 (in class): Thursday, February 6th

UNIT 3: Self-published External Communications (Website Materials, Blogs/Success Narratives, Social Media)

Week 5 (Tue, Feb 11th and Thurs, Feb 13th)

Week 6 (Tue, Feb 18th and Thurs, Feb 20th)

UNIT 4: Earned Media / Media Relations (Press Releases, Pitches, Press Kits, Op-eds)

Week 7 (Tue, Feb 25th and Thurs, Feb 27th)

Week 8 (Tue, Mar 4th and Thurs, Mar 6th)

Week 9 (Tue, Mar 11th and Thurs, Mar 13th)

Exam 2 (in class): Thursday, March 13th

Week 10 (NO CLASS; SPRING BREAK)

Week 11 (Tue, Mar 25th and Thurs Mar 27th)

UNIT 5: Writing for Crisis (Writing Under Pressure, Media Advisories, Press Statements, Talking Points)

Week 12 (Tue, Apr 1st; and Thurs, Apr 3rd)

Week 13 (Tue, Apr 8th; and Thurs, Apr 10th)

UNIT 6: Writing to Get the Job (PR Agency Tests, Cover Letters)

Week 14 (Tue, Apr 15th; and Thurs, Apr 17th)

Exam 3 (in class): Thursday, Apr 17th

Week 15 (Tues, Apr 22nd; [No class Thursday—reading day])

[NOTE: THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM FOR THIS COURSE; FINAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT WILL BE DUE APRIL 21st]

READING MATERIALS

Suggested Book:

The Associated Press Stylebook 2018 and Briefing on Media Law. The Associated Press, 2018. (ISBN: 0917360672) or the online subscription. You can access the AP Stylebook online through the UF Library.

Required assigned readings will be provided to students through Canvas.

ADDITIONAL UF RESOURCES

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.

University Police Department: Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.

GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392- 4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420.

General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.

On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.