

COMM 3334: Strategic Message Design

Fall 2016

MWF 11:30 a.m. – 12:25 p.m. Journalism 216 – Section 13953

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DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

This course offers exposure to the forms of writing and communications mediums required in the current public relations environment. It emphasizes the strategy of selecting the appropriate medium for a public relations message, and then crafting key messages tailored to specific audiences and organizational objectives. This includes strengthening students' ability to write strategically, concisely and effectively for various media, in accordance with industry standards. Many assignments require knowledge of Associated Press style. The course also familiarizes students with emerging trends in professional communication and the importance of tracking changes in the industry.

COURSE GOALS

- Students will identify target audiences and organizational objectives and develop tailored key messages.
- Students will solidify professional writing skills and learn to write strategically, concisely, accurately and effectively for various traditional and new communication channels, building upon strong key messages.
- Students will analyze trends and emerging issues with an eye toward potential public relations implications.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Though there is an ever-growing bank of options for HOW to share a message (think ground-cling ads, Snapchat, product placement), content remains king. Electronic communication, social media and visual mediums continue to gain momentum, while the ability to write for and produce print communications also remains crucial. Emerging professional communicators must master basic writing and message production skills while keeping an eye on emerging trends. Class time will include interactive lectures and discussions on a variety of communications channels, student presentations on emerging trends/topics, and development of communication materials for an actual client to help students develop industry knowledge and portfolio-quality writing clips. You also have the ability to walk away with a Hootsuite certification that shows potential employers experience with a social media management system.

COURSE TEXTS

Recommended

Wilcox, D. (2013) *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques* (7th ed.). Pearson. ISBN 978-0205211678
The Associated Press Stylebook (2016). The Associated Press. ISBN 978-0-917360-63-3

COURSE EVALUATION

Participation	50 points
Application Assignments	125 points
Client Project	125 points
Emerging trends presentation	40 points
Exams	60 points
Total Possible Points	400 points

COURSE GRADING SCALE

A	93-100%	B-	80-82%	D+	67-69%
A-	90-92%	C+	77-79%	D	60-66%
B+	87-89%	C	73-76%	F	Less than 60%
B	83-86%	C-	70-72%		

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments should be turned in hardcopy, unless otherwise instructed. All assignments should follow AP style guidelines. Check Carmen for additional information on assignments. Save early and save often.

Participation (50 points)

In an internship or job, it is mandatory that you show up and give a strong effort every day because both tasks and associates depend on your efforts, and this course is designed to begin bridging the gap between the academic and professional worlds. Earn participation/variable points by coming to class with readings and social listening completed to be ready for in-class responses, and by completing in-class activities. **Assignments completed in class cannot be made up regardless of the reason for absence.**

Application Assignments (125 points)

Application assignments give you the opportunity to apply the concepts learned in class by strategically planning and then creating a variety of professional communications. They will take your writing to a higher level by requiring more complex analyses of key messages for target audiences and awareness of appropriate “voice.” They will also ask you to think strategically beyond the writing – considering visuals, timing, choice of communication platforms, etc. There will be five assignments worth 25 points each.

Hootsuite Certification

One of the application assignments will require that you earn your Hootsuite Certification as a concrete way to show potential employers experience in social content strategy and creation. Hootsuite is a social media dashboard that allows individuals and brands to monitor, listen and engage with their audiences across multiple platforms in a centralized location. All class members will be enrolled in Hootsuite University at no charge, which will provide you with unique – and free – access to a set of valuable resources (free access will expire at the end of the semester, unfortunately). This process involves watching a complete set of videos about trends involving social media monitoring and lessons on how to apply a social media management system into your social media strategy plans for clients and then passing an exam with a score of 95 percent. You can attach this certification to your resume and you will be listed in a directory of industry professionals and have access to others who work in the field. Familiarity with a social listening/strategy platform such as Hootsuite easily transfers if future employers use other platforms.

Client Project (125 points)

Student groups will correspond with a local organization/company/brand, conducting a communications audit that describes, analyzes and evaluates its current use (or lack thereof) of communication channels. The group will offer specific recommendations for improving the organization’s strategic communication and support these recommendations by developing several portfolio quality pieces of communication collateral (i.e. news release, media advisory, social media editorial calendar). Each group will submit a final collateral package and present to the class about its client’s needs and the collateral recommended and developed.

Emerging Trends Presentation (40 points)

Student groups will be assigned to research an emerging trend/topic to present to the class, analyzing its impact on the communications industry and giving strong real-world examples to illustrate the topic. Groups will give a professional presentation of findings to the class and lead a short class discussion on the topic. Students will be asked to provide feedback on team dynamics and participation of all team members to ensure a fair distribution of workload. Presentations will be assigned near the start of the term and it will be the responsibility of the student group to manage time and be prepared by the assigned presentation day. Be aware that this assignment will coincide/overlap with other

course workload differently for each group, so please consider the schedule carefully as soon as you receive your presentation topic and date so you are not in a time crunch for multiple assignments at once.

Exams (60 points)

To evaluate your understanding of the course material, there will be two exams. The format will be announced at least one week prior to the exams.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Late Policy

In an internship or job, attendance is expected and missing a day of work can cost you income and damage your personal brand. All absences, regardless of the reason, count the same. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences, but I understand that sickness and other life circumstances occur so you have many opportunities to earn points in this course. **However, after the equivalent of one week of missed class, 5 points will be deducted from your final grade for each class you miss thereafter. In-class assignments cannot be made up.** If you are absent a day an assignment is discussed or assigned, it is your responsibility. Assignments completed in class cannot be made up. If you are absent a day an assignment is discussed or assigned, it is your responsibility to get details from me or a classmate. **I do not accept late work.** If you will be absent the day an assignment is discussed or due, contact me in advance for assignment details and turn it in early in class or in my office. Under no circumstances are assignments accepted via email unless explicitly stated otherwise. If you are absent the day an assignment is handed back, it is your responsibility to pick up your assignment from my office. I will not bring it with me to class. Personal computer and/or printer problems are not valid excuses. There are computer labs throughout campus, some of which are open 24 hours a day: <http://lt.osu.edu/locations-hours>.

COMMUNICATION

I will notify you of any reminders, schedule changes, other updates, etc. by email, so check your email frequently. Email is a professional obligation. The best way to contact me is through email at sterenberg.2@osu.edu. For email, please include COMM 3334 in the subject line to ensure your email receives high priority in my inbox.

CARMEN

I will post course information, handouts, optional worksheets and notes on Carmen. Your grades also will be posted on Carmen. You have one week after grades have been posted to inquire about a missing grade or a grade you believe to be incorrect.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Cheating and plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3325-23-04) defines academic misconduct as "any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process" (p. 2). Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the university's *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend you review the *Code of Student Conduct*, specifically the sections dealing with academic misconduct at studentaffairs.osu.edu/resources_csc.asp. If I suspect a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). If COAM determines you have violated the University's *Code of Student Conduct*, **the sanctions for misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.** If you have questions about this policy or what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me or visit COAM at <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html>.

REASONABLE ACCOMODATION POLICY

Students with disabilities who have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be

appropriately accommodated, and should inform me as soon as possible of their needs. When possible, documentation should be provided no later than the second week of class. The Office for Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 West 12th Ave.; Phone 614-292-3307; slds@osu.edu; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to alter the scheduled topics as the semester progresses. These changes will be announced in class.

Tentative Course Schedule

Part 1: Building a Strong Foundation

Week 1-4 *Introduction & Cornerstones of Communication*

8/24	Introduction/PR in the Information Age	
8/26	Cornerstones of Communication (Ch 1)	
8/29	Writing lab	
8/31	Persuasive Messaging (Ch 2)	
9/2	Choosing the right message/medium	
9/5	LABOR DAY	
9/7	Client Project Overview/Groups introduced	
9/9	Researching client/Communication Audit	
9/12	Social listening/Hootsuite introduction	
9/14	Identifying audiences and objectives	Twitter/Hootsuite accounts (9/14)
9/16	Communication audit workshop	Confirmed client (9/16)

Part 2: Development of Strategic Messages

Week 5-8 *Writing for Mass Media*

9/19	Identifying/tailoring key messages	
9/21	Newsletters/brochures (Ch 13)	
9/23	Communication audit workshop	ETP #1: IMC (9/23)
9/26	Finding/Making News (Ch 3, 4)	Application: Messaging document (9/26)
9/28	Media Advisories (Ch 6)	Client Communications Audit (9/28)
9/30	Media Advisories cont.	ETP #2: Brand journalism (9/30)
10/3	News releases (Ch 6)	Application: Media Advisory (10/3)
10/5	News releases cont (Ch 6)	ETP #3: Evolving press release (10/5)
10/7	News release on deadline	
10/10	Advertising/Fliers (Ch 16)	
10/12	Exam 1	Exam 1 (10/12)
10/14	FALL BREAK	

Part 3: Digital Strategy and Messaging

Week 9-13 *Planning & Writing for Digital Media*

10/17	Client project checkpoint	
10/19	Social content strategy/ed cals	ETP #4: Social strategies (10/19)
10/21	Blogs – the bigger picture (Ch 12)	Application: Hootsuite certification (10/21)

10/24	Blog outline development	
10/26	Writing for blogs/web (Ch 12)	
10/28	Social content creation: Twitter	Application: Blog post (10/28)
10/31	Social content creation: Visual storytelling	ETP #5: Visual storytelling (10/31)
11/2	Infographics/graphics	
11/4	Graphics/design (Ch 8)	Application: Infographic (11/4)
11/7	Client collateral workshop	
11/9	Social content creation: Instagram/Pinterest	Individual collateral items (11/9)
11/11	VETERANS DAY	
11/14	Guest Speaker (tentative)	
11/16	Emerging social messaging trends	ETP #6: Leveraging current events,
11/18	Emerging social messaging trends	#7: Staying true to your brand
		ETP #8: Knowing your audience,
		#9: Analyzing and adjusting
		<i>Note: Based on guest speaker's schedule, we may need to shift ETPs within this week but will finalize closer to the date.</i>

Part 4: Presenting Client Strategies & Messaging

Weeks 14-15

Client Project Presentations

11/21	Client Presentation overview/collateral pick-up	
11/23	THANKSGIVING	
11/25	THANKSGIVING	
11/28	Client project check point	
11/30	Client project presentations	Client presentations/Final collateral package (11/30-
12/2	Client project presentations	12/5)
12/5	Client project presentations	
12/7	Exam 2	<i>Exam 2</i>