

# **Strategic Message Design**

## **COMM 3334**

### **Autumn 2018**

Meeting Times: Tuesday and Thursday from 2:20-3:40 p.m. in Journalism 342

Instructor: Dan Farkas

Telephone: 614-668-8921 (cell)

E-mail: farkas.88@osu.edu

Twitter: @danfarkas

Office: Journalism 325

Office hours: Please, please, please, please, please email or call if these times don't fit with your schedule. I'm happy to work with you to find time to meet.

Monday and Wednesday from 1:00-2:30

Thursday from 9:30-11

#### **Course Description**

Message development for marketing communications - strategic communications writing. Prereq: Enrollment in Comm, Journal, or AgrComm major/minor. Not open to students with credit for 634.

#### **Overview**

Though there is an ever-growing bank of options for HOW to share a message (think ground-cling ads, Snapchat, video), content remains king. Print and electronic communication, social media and visual mediums all require a core skill: writing. Emerging professional communicators must master basic writing and message production skills, layering this on top of solid planning. This course is an intensive workshop in public relations writing that grows students' ability to plan and write strategically, concisely and effectively for many of the communication channels used in the current public relations environment. It emphasizes the strategy of selecting the appropriate medium for a message, and then crafting key messages tailored to specific audiences and organizational objectives. Many assignments require knowledge of Associated Press style.

The course also familiarizes students with local professionals and companies and the types of writing and other skills needed to be competitive in the current communication job market. Students will learn about message creation from local subject matter experts and develop their portfolio of writing clips and professional qualifications. Class time will include discussion, hands-on instruction and individual/group activities to apply concepts from the readings. Completing assigned reading before class is necessary to successfully complete quizzes and other in-class activities. The best way to improve your writing is to write. A lot.

We will also demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relations to media communications. In addition, we will demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

Oh yeah, let's have fun.

### **Course Objectives**

- Recognize the critical role of strong writing in the public relations process.
- Solidify professional writing skills and learn to write strategically, concisely, accurately and effectively for various communication channels.
- Develop key messages tailored to target audiences and organizational objectives.
- Connect the course content to its application in a professional setting, gaining a greater understanding of how professionals are creating messages for their companies and clients.
- Grow their appreciation for the different career paths available in communication and the fundamentals skills required.
- Strengthen ability to write factually, concisely and effectively, and to help others do the same through strong editing
- Maintain proficiency in Associate Press Stylebook rules and application
- Improve ability to effectively manage time and balance multiple tasks
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others.
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

These objectives are nine of the 12 professional values and competencies adopted by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications as principles of accreditation for curriculum and instruction. For the list, please visit <http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/STANDARDS.SHTML#std.2>.

## **Course Format**

Class sessions may include, but are not limited to, discussions, team exercises, article critiques, reviews of online materials, lectures, guest speakers and out-of-class lab work.

## **Texts**

- Write Like a PR Pro, Mary Sterenberg: <https://osu.pb.unizin.org/writelikeapro/>  
This is a free, online textbook.
- The Associated Press Stylebook. I hope you already have one.
- There will be online reading as well; you just won't have to buy a book.
- There will also be current events topics covered in quizzes. The content will come from the New York Times, Columbus Dispatch and the Lantern. Strategic communicators must know what's going on in the world.

## **Submitted Work Format (MANDATORY)**

I've worked with dozens of clients. They all have their own format. Some are silly. Really silly. But because they pay me, I follow format. And because I don't want you to take unnecessary heat at your dream internship or job, you should learn how to follow formatting too.

Unless otherwise noted, assignments will follow this format: Arial font, 12 point, single-spaced, double-spaced between paragraphs, black text color. All assignments should be submitted online through Carmen.

File Naming Protocol: studentlastname--assignmentname. (For example, student Jane Smith is turning in the draft of her news release. Her file should be named: smith--newsrelease)

If submitted work doesn't follow this format, there will be an automatic deduction of ten percentage points.

## **Attendance**

As presented in the university's "Academic Policies and Procedures," university-excused absences include "illness, death in the immediate family, religious observance, jury duty, and involvement in University—sponsored activities." Discuss any situation with the instructor, and every effort will be made to assist in this requirement.

Let me stress this again. If there's an issue with health or work or something, please let me know once the problem arises, not after the fact.

I lock the doors to class five minutes after the class begins. Employers have encouraged me to promote promptness, and this is my way of doing that.

## **Late Work, Missing Work, Make-ups and Extension Requests**

Work must be submitted by the assigned deadline. In the real world, deadlines matter. In my class, deadline matters. If work is due at 11:59 and it is submitted to 12:00, it's late. Please contact me in advance regarding an extension for an extreme circumstance like family illness or death. Work will be downgraded ten percentage points for every day late, including weekends.

## **Cheating and Plagiarism**

Don't. This class is about creating original work. Many of you will work with organizations that have established content. You can't submit that content as your own.

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." 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 and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that 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. If COAM determines that you violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me. For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentconduct.osu.edu/page.asp?id=1>) and with "Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity" (<http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html>).

## **Classroom Etiquette**

You're spending thousands of dollars to take this class. Please be responsible with your time and respectful of others. I reserve the right to dismiss you from class if you distract others. Yes, messing around on your phone during class distracts others.

## Special Concerns or Needs

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 150 Pomerane Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; Phone 614-292-3307; TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.osu.edu/>.

## Grading

Written materials will be evaluated on their conciseness, thoroughness, thoughtfulness, logic and persuasion. Please note: This class adheres to AP Style. Misspellings, fact errors, poor sentence construction, grammar and style mistakes will have the following consequences.

- Proofreading matters. Every mistake will result in at least a two-percentage point deduction from your grade.
- Issues with content development, logic flaws, lack of research or other structural issues will result in at least a four-percentage point deduction.
- I will also list steps for every assignment in the PP and in class. If you miss a step, you will lose at least a letter grade.
- Misspelling of any name results in an automatic F.

Here are some guidelines are for how your work will be evaluated:

- 100-90 With a few minor edits, piece could be sent as is.
- 89-80 Moderate editing tightening. Some typos & style mistakes.
- 79-70 Work needs significant editing, revision.
- 69-60 Start over. Piece is sloppy, mistake filled and/or ill conceived.
- 59 and below: Work does not conform to assignment

Assignment	Points
Written Assignments	450
Quizzes	450
Style Final	100
TOTAL	1000

I don't round up on points, and there will be two extra credit opportunities. Here is the grading scale.

- A 93% and higher
- A- 90-92.9%
- B+ 87-89.9%
- B 83-86.9%
- B-80-82.9%
- C+ 77-79.9%
- C 73-76.9%
- C-70-72.9%
- D+ 67-69.9%
- D 63-66.9%
- D-60-62.9%
- F 0-59.9%

### **Assignment Overviews:**

#### **Extra Credit Opportunity #1:**

Who wants a job after graduation? Networking is the most essential thing you can do to find work in May. LinkedIn is the best digital resource I know to improve your network. You will have a chance to earn up to 15 extra credit points for the following.

- By Friday at 11:59 p.m., please give me how many connections you have now. If not, you lose any chance of getting extra credit.
- The final day of class, I will look at your connections again.
- If you get 50 or more new connections (that's 1 a day) you will get 15 points.

#### **Written Assignments (450 points)**

This class is about developing research-based messaging, then bringing it to life in different formats. You will learn about different ways to create concepts and showcase your skills

#### **Quizzes (450 points)**

These will be online and be a mix of multiple choice, true false, and short answer. It will also include AP style, which you should already know from 2321. There will also be current event questions.

#### **AP Style Final (100 points)**

You have to know this if you want to work in any form of communication department.

**Copyright Disclaimer:**

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

**Schedule: I have two kids under the age of 8. They can and will get sick. Please check your email when I have to deal with class changes.**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Graded Assignments</b>
Weeks 1-3: Module 1	LinkedIn Research Basics Objectives and Evaluation Messaging	Message Points Quiz 1
Weeks 4-6: Module 2	Paid Media	Paid Media Quiz 2
Weeks 7-9: Module 3	Earned Media	Earned Media Quiz 3
Weeks 10-12: Module 4	Shared Media	Shared Media Quiz 4
Weeks 13-15 Module 5	Owned Media	Content Marketing Quiz 5
Finals Week		Final is Friday 12/7 from 4-5:45 p.m.

SYLLABUS AGREEMENT FORM  
COMM 3334:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (print name) have reviewed the syllabus, assignment description, tentative class schedule, and course policies within class on \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_ (date) and understand the classroom policies, expectations, and rules as stated in the syllabus, course policies, and class schedule. By signing this form I agree both to comply with the policies outlined and accept the policies and expectations for this course.

The following documents have been reviewed (please initial each one) \_\_\_\_\_ Syllabus  
in its entirety including the section on text and class policy, plagiarism and  
cheating, expectations, attendance, and assignments and grading  
\_\_\_\_\_ Assignment Description  
\_\_\_\_\_ Class Schedule  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other miscellaneous policies

I also understand the tentative nature of this syllabus and that the instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus, if deemed necessary. I will be informed if such modification takes place, in class, via e-mail (using your OSU e-mail address only) and/or on the Carmen site. It is my responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc.

Finally, I agree to care about this class, work hard, have fun and be a good teammate with everyone else in class. This is The Ohio State University. We're not here to be average.

SIGNED : \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_