

COMM 3334: Strategic Message Design
Spring 2016

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MWF 11:30 a.m. – 12:25 p.m. Journalism 216 – Section 13772

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 and producing the message for maximum impact. This includes strengthening students' ability to write strategically, concisely and effectively for various media, in accordance with industry standards. Many assignments require familiarity with Associated Press style.

COURSE GOALS

- Students will have an appreciation of the wide variety of communication mediums currently used in the communications industry.
- Students will solidify professional writing skills and learn to write strategically, concisely and effectively for various communication mediums, in accordance with industry standards.
- Students will develop the basic message production skills required by many potential employers.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Though there is an ever-growing bank of options for HOW to share a message (think blogs, snapchat, ads, QR codes), content remains king. Electronic communication, social media and visual mediums continue to gain momentum, and the ability to write for and produce print communications also remains crucial. Class time will include interactive lectures and discussions on a variety of communications mediums, social media assignments, and development of communication materials for an actual client to help students develop industry knowledge and portfolio-quality writing clips. Come to class ready to talk, share and explore new forms of writing and technology.

COURSE TEXTS

Required

Wilcox, D. (2013) *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques* (7th ed.). Pearson. ISBN 978-0205211678

Recommended

The Associated Press Stylebook (2015). The Associated Press. ISBN 978-0917360619

COURSE EVALUATION

Participation	50 points
Application Assignments	100 points
Client Project	130 points
Professional use of social media	60 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, participating in discussions and completing in-class work. **Assignments completed in class cannot be made up regardless of the reason for absence.**

Application Assignments (100 points)

Application assignments give you the opportunity to apply the concepts learned in class by strategically planning and then creating a variety of effective communications. There will be multiple assignments worth between 10 and 25 points each and **due dates will be given in class (these assignments are not listed on the syllabus).**

Professional Use of Social Media (60 points)

You will create a professional Twitter account (if you don't already have one) and participate in several professional Twitter chats to begin growing your professional persona on Twitter. You also will submit a guest post for a communications blog and analyze organizations that are using social media to catapult their brands and those you dub a #prfail. Many employers want or expect communications professionals to know the mechanics and professional etiquette of social media channels.

Client Project (130 points)

Student groups will correspond with a local organization/company/brand, conducting a communications audit that describes, analyzes and evaluates its current use of social media and other 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.

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. 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, in-class assignments cannot be made up, and after the equivalent of one week of missed class, 5 points will be deducted from your final grade for each class you miss thereafter.** 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 150 Pomerane Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; Phone 292-3307; TDD 292-0901; 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

****NOTE:** Application Assignments will be assigned/completed throughout Part 2 of the course. Details and due dates will be given in class and it is your responsibility to track these. Participation points are earned by attending class and completing in-class assignments and exercises. These cannot be made up.

Part 1: Building a Strong Foundation

Week 1-3 *Introduction & Cornerstones of Communication*

1/11	Introduction/PR in the Information Age
1/13	Cornerstones of Communication (Ch 1)
1/15	Persuasion (Ch 2)
1/18	NO CLASS – MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY
1/20	Choosing the right message/medium
1/22	Client Project Overview/Groups introduced
1/25	SWOT Analysis/Communication Audit
1/27	Collateral Items Outline/Group workshop
1/29	Client Selection/Client Research

Part 2: Development of Strategic Messages

Week 4-9 *Writing for Mass and Other Media*

****Application Assignments will be assigned/completed throughout Part 2 of the course**

2/1	Messaging	Confirmed client (2/1)
2/3	Internal comm	
2/5	Newsletters (Ch 13)	
2/8	Brochures (Ch 13)	Client Communication Audit (2/15)
2/10	Finding/Making News (Ch 3, 4)	
2/12	Finalizing Client Comm Audits	
2/15	Media Advisories (Ch 6)	
2/17	Media Advisories cont.	
2/19	News releases (Ch 6)	
2/22	News releases cont (Ch 5)	
2/24	Writing test	
2/26	Using Digital to Enhance Traditional PR (Ch 5)	
2/29	Exam 1	
3/2	Design/Ed cals	
3/4	Graphics/Infographics (Ch 8)	

3/7	Advertising/Fliers (Ch 16)
3/9	Client collateral workshops
3/11	Client collateral workshops

Part 3: Professional Use of Social/Digital Media

Weeks 10-13 *Creating Professional & Strategic Social Media*

3/14	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
3/16	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
3/18	NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK	
3/21	Blogs – the bigger picture (Ch 12)	
3/23	Blogs – the fine print (Ch 12)	
3/25	Blog post/outline development	
3/28	Professional Instagram/Pinterest	Blog post (3/28)
3/30	Twitter (Ch 12, Carmen reading)	
4/1	Twitter for business (Ch 12, Carmen reading)	Twitter account (4/1)
4/4	Professional Social Media Case Study Research	Individual collateral items (4/4)
4/6	Professional Social Media Presentations I	In-class social media presentations (4/6
4/8	Professional Social Media Presentations II	& 8)

Part 4: Meeting Client Needs & Expectations

Weeks 14-15 *Client Project Presentations*

4/11	Client Project Presentation Prep	Out-of-class Twitter chat form (4/11)
4/13	Guest Speaker (tentative)	In-class Twitter chat (4/13 - TENTATIVE)
4/15	Meet with client/Prepare presentations	
4/18	Client project presentations	Client presentations/Final collateral
4/20	Client project presentations	package (4/18)
4/22	Client project presentations	
4/25	Exam 2	

Final exam schedule: See Official Final Exam Schedule