

COMM 2321: WRITING FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION SPRING 2018, Tues/Thurs

INSTRUCTOR: JASMINE ROBERTS, M.A.

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OFFICE HOURS: MONDAYS/WEDNESDAYS 12:30-2:30 PM OR EMAIL TO SET AN APPOINTMENT

(PLEASE NOTE: OFFICE HOURS WILL NOT BEGIN UNTIL THE 2ND WEEK OF THE SEMESTER.)**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to provide you with a basic understanding of how to write for the mass media. We will specifically cover (but not limited to) writing for news media, public relations, marketing communications, social media and crisis communication. Tight-deadline writing is a critical skill that most media professionals must acquire in order to be successful. Learning to write factually, concisely and on deadline takes practice. The more you do it, the better and faster you become. Therefore, this high-intensity course is designed to prepare you for the deadlines and forms of writing required in a professional environment. **You will typically have a formal or informal assignment due every class period.**

The class also models a soft, flipped classroom model. It is designed to be more “hands-on”, rather than me talking at you hoping you are listening. Class time will include discussion on current news, interactive lectures, timed quizzes and writing assignments. I will offer lab time to practice your writing, complete in-class assignments and begin some homework assignments during class so that you have the opportunity to ask questions as you learn new styles of writing. You are not permitted to leave early during lab time since it’s your chance to get guidance on assignments. I will not answer questions on homework via email, so be sure you understand each assignment at the onset.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students who complete this course will also:

1. Understand the foundational role of news gathering and news writing in strategic communication industries.
2. Analyze and create messages for news media, public relations, marketing and brand communication industries.
3. Demonstrate proficient knowledge in Associated Press style writing guideline.
4. Be able write engaging materials under strict deadlines like a strategic communication professional.
5. Prepare a digital writing portfolio to present to a potential employer.

REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS:

- Roberts, J. (2016). *Writing for Strategic Communication Industries*. Retrieved from: <https://osu.pb.unizin.org/stratcommwriting/>
- *The Associated Press Stylebook 2017*. The Associated Press.
- Twitter Account. Follow @DispatchAlerts, @PRNews, @TheLantern, @NYTimes, @CNN and @AP.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

#	Assignment	Points	Length	Due Date
1	<i>Tight Deadline Writing Assignments (16%)</i>	80 total 20 per assignment	Varies	See Schedule
2	<i>General Writing Assignments (20%):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press Release • Feature Article 	Press Release (40) Feature Article (65)	250-300 words 500-750 words	2/27 3/27
3	<i>Reading Quizzes (9%)</i>	45 (9 quizzes)	5 questions per quiz	See Schedule
3	<i>AP Style Quizzes (16%)</i>	80 (Best 4 of 5)	10 questions per quiz	See Schedule
4	<i>AP Style Homework (TOP HAT) (10%)</i>	50	10 questions per module	See Schedule
5	<i>Digital Writing Portfolio (20%)</i>	100		4/27
6	<i>In Class Participation (8%):</i> Determined by weekly tweets and active participation in class discussions over class content, videos, and current events.	40 total 25-discussions 15-weekly tweets		

***Specific guidance and grading rubric for each assignment will be posted on Canvas.*

GRADING

You are graded on how well you've mastered the material, not solely on how hard work you've worked.

TOTAL POINTS FOR THE CLASS		500
Grade	Percent	Points
A	93-100	465-500
A-	90-92	450-464
B+	87-89	435-449
B	83-86	415-434
B-	80-82	400-414
C+	77-79	385-399
C	73-76	365-384
C-	70-72	350-364
D+	67-69	335-349
D	60-66	300-334
E	Less than 60	299 points or less

Interpretation of assignment grades:

A grades—**excellent work that goes above and beyond the assignment requirements.**

B grades—above average work that meets or surpasses the assignment requirements.

C grades—average work that meets the assignment requirements.

D grades—below average work that fails to meet the assignment requirements or is somehow deficient.

F grades—work that ignores significant parts of the assignment requirements or is plagiarized.

The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits me from e-mailing any grades, including final grades. Grades will be returned only in class/Canvas

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

All written assignments should be typed and formatted in Times New Roman 12-point font and double-spaced with one-inch margins. All assignments (both in-class and extended) should be turned in on Canvas only (no hard copy). *Tight deadline writing assignments are promptly due at the beginning of the class. General writing assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. on the designated date.*

TIGHT DEADLINE WRITING

Writing for the media often involves finding sources and writing solid content on a short deadline. When a source doesn't return your call, or when an event ends at 10 p.m. and your story must be filed by midnight, it takes quick thinking and problem solving to get the job done. **There will be approximately four writing assignments given in class that are due at the beginning of the next class. A running list of due dates will be available on Canvas and the syllabus schedule.** If you are absent the day an assignment is given, ask a classmate or see me during my office hours for the assignment. There is no flexibility on set deadlines. You may turn in the assignment early, but NOT late.

GENERAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

- Press Release: We will learn how to write a press release with the intention to announce a newsworthy event to those a part of the news media community. I plan to provide a list of topics that you may choose from in order to complete the assignment. *250-300 words*

You must interview and quote a minimum of 2 LIVE HUMAN sources. One source should be directly affiliated with the organization discussed in the press release. The other source should be third-party (example: customer, previous attendee, volunteer, etc.). You are required to provide a source list with contact information. I will reach out to a few of your sources to fact check your article.

FEATURE: We will learn to write feature articles that have more of a “lifespan” than general news articles and provide for more descriptive writing with a focus on people, organizations, and events. You will write one feature article this semester on a topic related to the Ohio State community. You will tweet out your topic ideas to me using my Twitter handle @ProfJasmine. I must approve your story pitch before moving forward. *500-750 words*

You must interview and quote a minimum of 3 LIVE HUMAN sources. You are required to provide a source list with contact information. I will reach out to a few of your sources to fact check your article.

Digital Writing Portfolio

Many employers require job applicants to submit a writing portfolio or samples to demonstrate their professional writing skills. To prepare for this, you will submit a digital writing portfolio at the end of the semester, serving as your “final.” The writing portfolio must include the following materials:

- Two Press Releases (original press release and a new one over a different event)
- Feature Article (revised)
- Fact Sheet
- Media Alert

Photos are encouraged to enhance the optics of the writing portfolio. I will evaluate the portfolio primarily from the perspective of a strategic communication professional and hiring manager. More detailed information will be provided as the assignment due date approaches.

Reading Quizzes

Primary readings are from the class textbook, [Writing for Strategic Communication Industries](#). You are responsible for the assigned readings. This is critical because I will not simply repeat the book material during lectures. To ensure that you are keeping up with the readings, there will be nine reading quizzes throughout the semester (schedule found at the end of the syllabus). Each quiz will have five questions, worth one point each. These quizzes will also contain questions over videos embedded in the textbook. **You may not make up reading quizzes if you are absent, unless there is an unforeseen, extreme circumstances** (example: illness, family emergency). Please bring documentation if you are extremely sick.

AP Style Quizzes

For many careers involving writing or editing, a solid understanding of Associated Press (AP) style is required. This class includes five AP style quizzes; your top four scores will count toward your grade. Each quiz will have 10 questions, worth two points each. Attention to detail and completing the AP style homework will help you do well on the quizzes. **If you know you will be absent on the day there is an AP quiz, you may take it in advance, but not after the due date. However, I will allow you to make up the quiz after the due date under unforeseen, extreme circumstances** (example: illness, family emergency). Please bring documentation if you are sick.

AP Style Homework

A homework packet will be assigned to practice your understanding of AP style. The packet (found on Canvas) has five modules, each containing 10 questions that cover the material for the corresponding quiz. Homework assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. one week before the scheduled quiz (or occasionally due the class period before the quiz).

POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Attendance (TOP HAT): Attendance will be taken through Top Hat, a BYOD (bring your own device) system that is integrated with Canvas. An attendance code will be displayed at the beginning of each class. You will need to enter this code by logging into the Top Hat website or you may text it to a Top Hat attendance number. You will not be able to see the code on your own devices. Again it will only be displayed on the projector.

Since many assignments are to be completed in class, attendance is imperative. You need to be physically present in order to participate in class activities that will help improve your writing. Attendance is expected at all class sessions, but you may miss three classes without penalty. **For every class you miss beyond three, your grade will be lowered by 1/3 of the overall grade** (e.g., B would become B-, C+ would become C, etc.). University approved absences are exempt from this policy. Absences due to medical concerns will be excused with appropriate documentation, provided the documentation is submitted *within one week* of the absence. I will NOT accept documentation beyond this point, which will then make the absence unexcused.

Late Assignments Policy: Late assignments will NOT be accepted. Deadlines are deadlines. Extensions are not granted in this class to mimic the news/corporate media environment and culture. An editor of a publication or the manager at a media corporation will not grant an extension on an article, advertising copy or press release because “you’re so stressed out and trying to juggle a lot of things.” Everyone is busy and I understand life happens. You may also turn in an assignment early if you know you will be absent from class. However, please do not ask for an extension on any assignment. **Failure to turn in an assignment on time will result in an automatic zero for the grade. No exceptions.**

Note Taking: Please be aware that I do not allow students to take pictures of lectures slides or record lectures during class unless you have proper documentation from the Office of Disability Services.

Email Policies: Work-life balance is very important to me. Therefore, I ask that students give me 24 hours to respond to emails. I also do not answer emails sent after 7 p.m. until the following weekday. If you do not hear from me within 48 hours after sending your initial email, you may send me another email.

Classroom Civility: We want to build a positive classroom climate that is comfortable for everyone. It is especially important that we (1) display respect for all members of the classroom, including the instructor and students; (2) avoid unnecessary disruption during class time (e.g., having private conversations, reading the newspaper, doing work for other classes, making/receiving cell phone calls, text messaging, etc.); and (3) avoid racist, sexist, homophobic, or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom. This is not an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, they represent the minimal standards that help make the classroom a productive learning environment for all concerned. **Cell phones should not be used in class (outside of weekly tweets).**

In Class Participation: Here is a breakdown of my interpretations of the participation grade for this course:

A/A-: Student consistently and actively engages with the class concepts throughout the semester. Answers questions asked during class (verbally or online through Top Hat/Twitter) on a regular basis. Offers examples and new perspectives to the class. Refrains from using websites or social media networking sites not related to class.

B+/B: Student engages with the class concepts and answers questions asked during class (verbally or online through Top Hat/Twitter); however, not throughout the entire semester. Occasionally offers examples and new perspectives to the class. Sometimes uses websites or social media networking sites not related to class during lecture.

B-/C+/C: Student sometimes engages with class concepts and answers questions. Rarely offers examples and new perspectives. Frequently on other websites or social media networking sites during lecture.

C-/D: Student very rarely engages with class concepts or answers questions. Almost always on other websites or social media networking sites during lecture.

F: Student does not engage with class concepts at all. Rarely present in class or very frequently on other websites or social media networking sites during lecture.

Note: Simply being present in class **does not** mean you are participating. In other words, do not confuse physical attendance with *active* participation. However, missing class can affect your participation grade, even if the absence is excused. This is different from the attendance policy mentioned in the last page. I cannot give you participation points for a class you missed, as that would not be fair to the other students who attended and ***actively participated*** in class.

Tweets: Students should tweet out personal thoughts about newsworthy topics and articles each week. Use the class hashtag #stratcomm2321. Please put some thought into your tweet. Do not simply type (for example), “Very interesting article” or “So shocking”. This counts toward your participation grade so please take this seriously (tweets also help facilitate class discussions). **You will need to create a Twitter account if you do not already have one.** Students are responsible for submitting a screenshot of their weekly tweets (15 total) on Canvas by the last day of semester.

Punctuality: Class begins on time every day to guarantee that all scheduled discussions and activities are completed. You are expected to be punctual. **Furthermore, frequent tardiness can negatively impact your grade.**

Challenging a Grade (24/7 policy): I am always willing to discuss your grades with you, but I will not do so during class time. Please wait **24 hours** after viewing a grade before you decide to voice your concerns to me. To challenge a grade, you must meet me during office hours or make an appointment within **one week** of the assignment being returned to you. Please note that a challenge may result in grades remaining the same, raised or lowered.

Extra Credit: There is a maximum of 15 extra-credit points (with the exception of one opportunity discussed later) available in this class, which will be applied to the final point total. You can earn it in three ways:

- **Activities (5 points):** Participate in an outside class activity identified during the semester (5 points for attending the event/activity). I will announce several events, but you can only attend one for extra credit. Write a 2-paragraph paper about the event (include information about what you learned) and attach proof that you were there (ex: photo of the audience or speaker, copy of the attendance sheet). *Please note you will not receive credit if you do not provide proof.*
- **Twitter Chats (2 points each):** There will be occasional Twitter chats (3 maximum) organized by strategic communication educators and professionals across the country. I will announce the specific times of the chats as the time comes. You must submit a snapshot of at least 5 tweets that you posted during the chat in order to receive extra credit. For participating, you will earn 2 points per chat.
- **Research (4 points maximum):** Take part in [School of Communication research](#) (points vary depending upon the rigor/time length of the activity).

Exception Extra Credit Opportunity—Lantern Publication: If you submit a story you write **for this class** to *The Lantern*, and it gets published with only your by-line (and you tell me about it), you will receive **10 bonus points!** This is in addition to any extra credit you might have already earned. Try to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. *This extra credit is not available to those who currently or have previously worked for The Lantern.*

Other extra credit opportunities may be announced toward the end of the semester (but this is not guaranteed). *All extra credit must be sent to the Bonus folder on Canvas by the end of class on April 19. Any submission after this deadline will not be accepted for extra credit even if you completed the assignment.*

Letter of Recommendation Policy: Please note that professors are not obligated to write references for any student who asks us. I don't write a letter of recommendation for a student unless I have a positive relationship with the individual and truly know him or her well. Also I reserve letter of recommendations only for students who have excelled academically in the course (minimum of a B+ in the course). If you meet the aforementioned criteria, please give me a minimum 30-day advance notice (there is some flexibility for job references, as those might be requested from prospective employers on a shorter notice). Requests for a letter of recommendation before 30 days of a graduate school application deadline will not be granted.

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, selling notes/papers, uploading notes/papers to study websites (ex: Course Hero) 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 http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp.

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 (COAM). If COAM determines you have violated the University’s *Code of Student Conduct*, the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about this policy or what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me or visit COAM at <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html>.

Student Sexual Misconduct Policy: Title IX clearly indicates that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. OSU provides confidential assistance for sexual assault victims. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here:

OSU Police Division: (614) 292-2121

Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio (SARNCO): (614) 267-7020

OSU Counseling and Consultation Service: 614-292-5766

Title IX Coordinator: Kellie Brennan (614)-247-5838

Diversity

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

Writing Center: All students, especially those who have difficulty writing, are encouraged to visit the *OSU Writing Center*. Their web address is <https://cstw.osu.edu/writing-center> and their phone number is 688-5865. The Writing Center offers two kinds of tutorials: 1) Scheduled, 50-minute tutorials in 4120A Smith Lab and 2) Drop-in, 20-minute tutorials at our satellite centers (First floor Thompson Library and 114 Smith-Steeb Residence Hall)

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Students with disabilities who have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor 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 W. 12th Avenue; Phone 292-3307; TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>.

Copyright and Academic Freedom 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.

The information provided in this syllabus constitutes a list of basic class policies. I reserve the right to modify this information when deemed necessary for any reason. You will be notified in class, via email, and/or on Canvas if and when any changes occur.

TENTATIVE DAILY SCHEDULE

*Assignments are due on the date listed in parentheses.

Week	Date	Topic and Activity*	Reading(s) Due	Assignment(s) Due**
Week 1	T 1/9	Introduction/Review Syllabus		
	R 1/11	What is Strategic Communication? Academic vs. Media Writing	Chapter 1	Reading Quiz #1 (CH. 1)
Week 2	T 1/16	Writing in the media environment/ Basic tool of writing	Chapter 2	Reading Quiz #2 (CH. 2) <i>Grammar exercises (in class assignment)</i>
	R 1/18	AP Style		AP Style Homework #1 (1/18) <i>Bring AP Style book to class today and next week</i>
Week 3	T 1/23	AP Style		
	R 1/25	AP Style		<i>AP Style Quiz #1 (1/25)</i>
Week 4	T 1/30	Newswriting Law and Ethics	Chapter 3	Reading Quiz #3 (CH. 3)
	R 2/1	News and News Value <i>(Out of Class—Listen to Lecture posted on Carmen).</i>	Chapter 4	Reading Quiz #4 (CH.4)/ AP Style Homework #2
Week 5	T 2/6	Basic Newswriting (leads and inverted pyramid style)	Chapter 5	Reading Quiz #5 (CH. 5)
	R 2/8	Basic Newswriting (headlines and attribution)		<i>AP Style Quiz #2 (2/8)</i>
Week 6	T 2/13	Introduction to Public Relations/Writing Press Releases	Chapters 7 & 9	TD #1
	R 2/15	Press Kit Materials/Writing Press Releases		Reading Quiz #6 (CH. 9)
Week 7	T 2/20	The Importance of Media Relations: PR Pitching/Writing Press Releases	Chapter 8	Reading Quiz #7 (CH. 8)
	R 2/22	Press Release Draft Workshop		TD #2
Week 8	T 2/27	Intro to Feature Writing	Chapter 6	Reading Quiz #8 (CH. 6)/ Press Release Due (2/27)
	R 3/1	Writing Feature Leads		AP Style Homework #3

Week 9	T 3/6	Writing Feature Leads		TD #3
	R 3/8	Feature Writing: Descriptive Devices		AP Style Quiz #3 (3/8)
Week 10	T 3/13	NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK		
	R 3/15			
Week 11	T 3/20	<i>Guest Speaker: Life After College—Writing for your first “career” job</i>		AP Style Homework #4
	R 3/22	Feature Article Draft Workshop		AP Style Quiz #4
Week 12	T 3/27	Diversity Style Guide: Writing using inclusive and non-discriminatory language		Feature Article (3/27)
	R 3/29	Social Media: Uses and Messaging	Chapter 10	Reading Quiz #9 (CH.10)
Week 13	T 4/3	<i>Guest Speaker: Internal/Employee Communications</i>		TD#4
	R 4/5	Communicating During a PR Crisis: Holding/Media Statements		
Week 14	T 4/10	Writing a Marketing Communications Plan		AP Style Homework #5
	R 4/12	Content Marketing Writing and Opinion Editorials		
Week 15	T 4/17	Writing portfolio workshop	Chapter 13	AP Style Quiz #5
	R 4/19	Writing portfolio workshop		
FINALS	R 4/27	Digital Writing Portfolio Due		