

Write Like a PR Pro

COMM 3334 - HYBRID

Strategic Message Design

Fall 2021

Wed. 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m. Journalism 342 – Section 12179

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Office Hours: Monday 9:30-11:30 a.m., Tuesday 2:30-3:30 p.m., Wednesday 3-4 p.m. by appointment (virtually)

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

Though there is an ever-growing bank of options for HOW to share a message (think ground-cling ads, Instagram/Facebook stories, video), content remains king. Print and electronic communication, social media and visual mediums all require a core skill: writing. Emerging professional communicators must master writing and message production skills, and layer 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 both online quizzes and in-class activities. The best way to improve your writing is to write. A lot.**

COURSE GOALS

- Students will recognize the critical role of strong writing in the public relations process.
- Students will solidify professional writing skills and learn to write strategically, concisely, accurately and effectively for various communication channels.
- Students will develop key messages tailored to target audiences and organizational objectives.
- Students will 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.
- Students will grow their appreciation for the different career paths available in communication and the fundamentals skills required.

COURSE TEXTS

Write Like a PR Pro, Mary Sterenberg: <https://osu.pb.unizin.org/writelikeapro/> (This is a free, online textbook.)

HYBRID COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This course will have in-person and online components, but students should plan attend class LIVE ONLINE OR IN-PERSON during all scheduled class periods.

- Do not schedule work or other commitments during class periods.
- Have access to reliable Wi-Fi and take responsibility for ensuring you can access online resources such as discussion boards, video/audio materials and quizzes. You have access to course expectations and deadlines in

advance, and the Carmen team and I are available to help with technical issues PRIOR to due dates. Refer to <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmencanvas> for answers to many Carmen problems or questions for the Carmen support team.

- Be active in Carmen, which means accessing our course online multiple times per week as I don't see you live every class period and may post updates or announcements. The class includes a group-based project worth a significant portion of your grade, so this also ensures you remain connected to and active within your group. The module for each week will provide assigned readings, needed materials and assignments for that week (i.e., due dates for discussion posts and reminders for upcoming quizzes/exams/assignments).
- You must complete all assigned readings BEFORE coming to class each week. This will help ensure you don't lose points in online discussions/reading quizzes and are ready to begin applying concepts during our limited time together in class. Quizzes are due by the start of class, as noted on the syllabus. DO NOT collaborate with classmates on quizzes.
- Bring a computer to any in-person classes so you can access online materials, discussions and resources.

COURSE EVALUATION

Application Assignments	100 points
Writing Samples	160 points (4 assignments x 40 points)
Quizzes	100 points
Online Discussions	40 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 and should follow AP style guidelines, unless otherwise instructed. Check Carmen for additional information on assignments. Save early and save often.

In-class writing/application (100 points)

In an internship or job, it is mandatory that you show up and give a strong effort every day to learn and grow new skills. This course adopts the same mentality as it is designed to begin bridging the gap between the academic and professional worlds. The writing and exercises we do during scheduled class time allow students to put class concepts into action and learn by doing with the benefit of peer and instructor review, feedback and discussion. A big part of our in-class work will focus on a group Client Project, where students will analyze the communications of a local client and provide recommendations and writing support for that client. Students are responsible for completing in-class writing/application assignments on class days and assignments **MUST BE SUBMITTED BY THE END OF THE CLASS PERIOD TO RECEIVE CREDIT**. If you require an accommodation due to COVID-19 or another documented issue, please contact the instructor right away.

Writing Samples (160 points)

You will strategically plan and create a several four 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. Any assignment containing a major factual error will drop a full letter grade. A major factual error is defined as one that gives the wrong information to the audience, including such things as misspelling the client's name, incorrect identification of key sources or having the wrong place and time for an upcoming event. A detailed assignment sheet and rubric will be provided on Carmen for all writing sample assignments.

Quizzes (100 points)

To evaluate your understanding of the course material and ensure all students come to class prepared to apply new knowledge and skills, there will be quizzes on assigned readings & lecture material (**content included on each quiz is provided in the “Quiz Topics” document on Carmen**). **This course uses quizzes in lieu of exams to align more closely with application of the concepts.** Proctorio is the online exam proctoring tool integrated into Carmen. Use of Proctorio is **required** for the exams in this course. Students are required to have a webcam (USB or internal) with a microphone and a strong and stable internet connection. You will need to use a Chrome browser. Visit the [Student Guide to Proctorio](#) to get started before the exams.

Quizzes are available via Carmen and should be completed by start of class on the date listed on the syllabus. There will be no study guides, and it is the responsibility of the student to complete assigned readings, take notes in class, prepare for and take quizzes independently. STUDENTS MAY NOT WORK TOGETHER OR COLLABORATE IN ANY WAY ON QUIZZES.

Online Discussions/Responses (40 points)

We only meet as a class in person or online once a week, so the online discussion boards will be a place for us to discuss course concepts as either a larger class or within groups as we work on our Client Project. There will be four required discussions and you will earn 5 points for making a substantive post AND 5 points for responding to at least one classmate's post. Requirements for each discussion post and response will be provided in class and on Carmen.

Course Policies

Attendance & Participation

In an internship or job, attendance is expected and missing a day of work can cost you income and damage your personal brand. The attendance policy for this class is to allow one excused (i.e., documented) absence. Because **Communication 3334 is a hybrid class that only meets once a week and requires group work during class time, if a student misses more than one class during a regular 15-week semester, the final course grade will be lowered one letter grade for each unexcused absence beyond one.** If you require an accommodation due to COVID-19 or another documented issue, please contact the instructor right away. The university also has a process to document COVID accommodation requests: <https://slds.osu.edu/covid-19-info/covid-related-accommodation-requests/>.

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.

Extra Credit: There are 5 extra credit points available in this class. Occasionally I will award extra credit beyond these 10 points to students for in-class activities as discussed in class. Extra credit will be applied to the final grade point total. *Submit all extra credit on Carmen by the final day of class (not counting finals week).*

- **Activities (4 points):** Participate in an on-campus professional development activity during the semester (i.e., PRSSA or BASCA meeting or other events as approved by the course instructor) and submit responses to the questions in the Extra Credit assignment on Carmen as well as proof of attendance.
- **SEI class response rate (1 point):** If the class hits an 80% response rate on SEIs, I will give the entire class a point.

COVID-19 and Illness Policies

University COVID policies

All students, faculty and staff are required to comply with and stay up to date on all university safety and health guidance (<https://safeandhealthy.osu.edu>).

Masks and social distancing

The university requires that everyone on campus wears masks indoors (for more information, see <https://safeandhealthy.osu.edu/>). Wearing a mask that covers your mouth and nose is important because it can help

slow the spread of COVID-19. There are several reasons to do this, even if you are vaccinated. First, the “Delta variant,” which is the dominant version of the virus that causes COVID in the U.S. today, is highly contagious, and has caused a huge increase in cases recently. Second, even if you are vaccinated, there have been some cases of “breakthrough” infection, where a vaccinated person becomes ill. These cases are much less severe than cases among unvaccinated individuals, but you still don’t want to go through it if you don’t have to. Finally, and most importantly, if you get COVID-19 you can spread it to other people, including young children and others who cannot take the vaccine. In short, masks help protect you and they help you protect other people.

Social distancing may also help slow the spread of COVID. Although classrooms are no longer configured to ensure that students can spread out, doing so may still be helpful if you have the opportunity.

Illness or absence

Given the continued high prevalence of COVID, including breakthrough cases among vaccinated individuals, students should not attend class if they are feeling sick. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the virus to others. Most students should be able to complete a successful semester despite illness-induced absence. If you are too ill to participate in this course due to COVID-19 or another illness, please contact the instructor as soon as you are able. If you are absent due to illness, including but not limited to COVID, I will give you a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. You do not need to provide a physician’s document of illness, but you should advise me via email as soon as you are safely able to do so.

Attendance

Given the continued high prevalence of COVID, including breakthrough cases among vaccinated individuals, students should not attend class if they are feeling sick. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the virus to others. Most students should be able to complete a successful semester despite illness-induced absence. If you are absent due to illness, including but not limited to COVID, I will give you a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. You do not need to provide a physician’s document of illness, but you should advise me via email as soon as you are safely able to do so.

Recordings of class sessions

I intend to record of class sessions on Zoom, where they can be accessed via the class Zoom after the live class period as needed. These recordings are not a substitute for the in-person learning experience. Instead, they are a tool to help those who are forced to miss class on account of illness to catch up. As such, recordings may fail to capture in-class activities, they may be incomplete in other ways, or they be entirely missing (e.g., in the event of a problem with the recording technology).

Other related resources

COVID-19 Accommodations. The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university’s [request process](#), managed by Student Life Disability Services. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Food Security (<https://www.buckeyefoodalliance.org/>, 614-688-2508). The Ohio State University is committed to ensuring that all students have access to adequate and healthy food. Any undergraduate or graduate student with a BuckID may confidentially use the Buckeye Food Alliance food pantries. No proof of need is required. The pantry is located in Lincoln Tower, Suite 150 (1800 Cannon Dr., Columbus, OH 43210). Check the website or call for current hours.

COVID-19 emergency financial assistance (<https://sfa.osu.edu/contact-us/consumer-disclosure/COVID-19-aid>)

Ohio State has emergency grants available to aid students who are facing unexpected financial challenges related to the pandemic. Students may use the funds toward any component of the cost of attendance, or for emergency costs that arise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic such as food, housing, tuition, health care (including mental health care) or child care. Please visit the website for more information.

Assignments

The instructor includes in advance the tentative schedule for the semester. It announces in advance the schedule for each assignment. Assignments must be handed in on time. The instructor is under no obligation to allow make-up assignments. NO LATE assignments will be accepted.

Plagiarism

Using another person's research or using large verbatim sections of information from the work of another will be considered plagiarism. Students who have plagiarized will be reported to the Dean and penalized. The penalty is severe. A grade of zero will be given for the assignment, and possibly failure for the entire course. If unsure, give credit to your source.

Course Content: Please complete reading assignments by the assigned date. The text is designed to give both a sound theoretical foundation and practical skills for campaign creation. To complete assignments correctly and to perform well on quizzes, it is essential that you read the text.

Course Technology

For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

Carmen:

- I will post course information, readings 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.
- Carmen, Ohio State's Learning Management System, will be used to host materials and activities throughout this course. To access Carmen, visit Carmen.osu.edu. Log in to Carmen using your name.# and password. If you have not setup a name.# and password, visit my.osu.edu.
- Help guides on the use of Carmen can be found at <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmen>
- **This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.**
 - [Carmen accessibility](#)
- **Carmen Zoom:**
 - Office hours will be held through Ohio State's conferencing platform, Carmen Zoom. A separate guide to accessing Carmen Zoom and office hours is posted on the course Carmen page under Files.
 - Students may use the audio and video functions if a webcam and microphone are available. If not, there is still a chat function within Carmen Zoom for the student to live chat with the professor or TA in the virtual office hours room.
 - [Carmen Zoom](#) help guide
- **Proctorio:**
 - Proctorio, an online proctoring tool, will be used during this course to administer quizzes. Proctorio offers you flexibility to take your exams at the time and in the location of your choosing. Students are required to have a webcam (USB or internal) with a microphone and a strong and stable internet

connection. During the course of an exam, Proctorio will record the testing environment, therefore students should select private spaces for the exam session where disruptions are unlikely and where recording devices can be enabled. Instructions for Proctorio use will be provided. To use Proctorio you must be **over 18 years of age**. Additionally, the tool has **limitations in its accessibility for students reliant upon screen readers and keyboard navigation**. If you have concerns about using an online proctoring tool for the reasons listed above or in general, please work with your instructor to find an equivalent alternative. Additional information on academic integrity at Ohio State and recommended proctoring options are available.

- Proctorio offers free [24/7 student support](#) through web chat or email.

Office Hours & Email

I will hold office hours via Zoom ([Carmen Zoom](#) help guide). Office hours are the best place to ask in-depth questions about course readings or lectures, as well as any question about grades. I am also happy to give you feedback on your work *at least 48 hours before* the assignment is due during office hours. Email should be used to schedule an appointment outside of office hours or for *short* questions clarifying class assignments or specific items from lectures.

Course 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.

Academic Misconduct:

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>. **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 policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

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.

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.

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear 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 (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Interim Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Molly Peirano, at titleix@osu.edu

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF (Mental Health Statement):

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24-hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445)

Who can I talk to?	Who can I talk to?
Where can I go for help with emotional distress?	Where can I go for help with emotional distress?
Counselling and Consultation Service 614-292-5766 1030 Lincoln Tower, 1800 Cannon Dr. Younkin Success Center, 1640 Neil Ave.	Student Wellness Center 614-292-4527 RPAC, 337 Annie & John Glenn Ave.
"Let's Talk" Thursday evenings, 6-8 p.m. Multicultural Center, Ohio Union	Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio 614-267-7020
Psychology Services Center 614-292-2345 105 Psychology Building, 185 Neil Ave.	Buckeye Peer Access Line (PAL) 8 P.M. – Midnight (only) 614-514-3333
Stress Trauma & Resilience 614-293-STAR Harding Hospital, 1670 Upham Dr.	Suicide Prevention Lifeline 614-221-5445 or 800-273-8255 Text 4hope to 741741 Or call 911 for immediate assistance

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Accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities

Requesting accommodations

Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292-3307, slds@osu.edu; slds.osu.edu.

DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to alter the scheduled topics as the semester progresses. These changes will be announced via Carmen announcements or email.

Tentative Course Schedule

Part 1: PR Planning & Writing Basics

Week 1 8/25	Why Writing Matters/Professional Inventory Cornerstones of Communication (Ch. 1)	
Week 2 9/1	Persuasive Messaging Client Project Kickoff Discovery Phase/Communication Audit (Ch. 2)	READ: Intro, Chapters 1 & 2 WATCH: Persuasive Messaging Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #1
Week 3 9/8	Understanding Branding Identifying Audiences and Objectives	READ: Two posted article on social media SUBMIT: Discussion Post #1 (post due by midnight 9/5, responses due by start of class 9/8)
Week 4 9/15	Message Strategy & Communication Plans (Ch. 3) Client interview prep	READ: Chapter 3 WATCH: Messaging Lecture COMPLETE: - Quiz #2 - Confirmed client

Part 2: Development of Strategic Messages

Week 5 9/22	Owned media writing: Blogs/Writing for the Web (Ch. 4)	READ: Chapter 4 WATCH: Owned Media Writing Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #3 SUBMIT: Discussion Post #2 (post due by midnight 9/19, responses due by start of class 9/22)
Week 6 9/29	Newsletter/Article Writing Client Project: analysis of owned media	COMPLETE: Quiz #4: Hootsuite Certification SUBMIT: Blog post
Week 7 10/6	Shared media writing: Social Content Strategy (Ch. 5 & 6) Social Media Best/Worst practices	READ: Chapters 5, 6 WATCH: Social Strategy Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #5

Week 8 10/13	Social Content Creation (Ch. 7, 8, 9) Client Project: analysis of shared media	READ: Chapters 7, 8, 9 WATCH: Social Content Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #6 SUBMIT: Discussion Post #3 (post due by midnight 10/10, responses due by start of class 10/13)
Week 9 10/20	Video (Ch. 10) Communication Audit Work Session	READ: Chapter 10 COMPLETE: Quiz #7 SUBMIT: Social Media Strategy/Content
Week 10 10/27	Visual Messaging (Ch. 11) Design/Infographics	READ: Chapter 11 WATCH: Design Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #8
Week 11 11/3	Paid media writing: Advertising/Fliers [Danny] Client Project: analysis of paid media & inter-group case study discussions	WATCH: Advertising Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #9
Week 12 11/10	Earned Media Writing: Finding/Making News (Ch. 12 & 13) Media Advisories/News Releases/Pitching Finalize communication audits	READ: Chapters 12, 13 WATCH: Finding/Making News Lecture & News Release Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #10 SUBMIT: Media Advisory
Week 13 11/17	Finalizing Client Collateral Items	SUBMIT: Client Collateral Item (individual)
Week 14 11/24	THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS	
Week 15 12/1	Client Presentation Development	
Week 16 12/8	Client Project Presentations	SUBMIT: Communication Audits (one per group) Presentations (one submitted per group) SUBMIT: Discussion Post #4 (post due by midnight 12/9, response due by midnight 12/11)

