

# SYLLABUS: COMM 3334

## STRATEGIC MESSAGE DESIGN

### SECTION 16337, AUTUMN 2025, HYBRID

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#### MEETING TIME

**Hybrid:** In-Person on Tuesdays from 12:45 - 2:05 p.m. + asynchronous writing lab

#### LOCATION

**Journalism Building 342**

Tuesday's class is in-person; Writing Labs are asynchronous

#### COMMUNICATION

You're more than welcome to reach out to me anytime. Email is the best way to reach me: [bailey.1968@osu.edu](mailto:bailey.1968@osu.edu).

However, with more urgent needs, you can call or text me at 614-716-9678. Please identify yourself with your first and last name and this class (Comm: 3334). **I will notify you of any reminders, schedule changes, other updates via Carmen Announcements, so be sure to check Carmen regularly.**

#### OFFICE HOURS:

**In-person:** Wednesdays 12:30 - 2 p.m.

**Virtually:** By appointment

#### Virtual Office Hours will Be Held Via Zoom:

<https://osu.zoom.us/j/7110498391?pwd=grqlb1jvwzKzYv5zpytL9L9JmIDOHh.1>

Meeting ID: 711 049 8391

Password: 405016

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

There is an ever-growing bank of options for HOW to share a message. However, all of these different mediums require two core skills: writing and strategic intent. Even with support from Artificial Intelligence tools, emerging professional communicators must master strong writing and message production skills. This course is an intensive workshop in public relations writing designed to hone students' abilities to plan and write concise, compelling messaging across channels.

Strong writing with an understanding of grammar and AP style are highly sought-after PR skills. Therefore, in addition to strategy and planning, this course will emphasize the importance of creating client-ready materials that follow AP style and are free from mistakes. Many assignments require knowledge of the Associated Press style. It is recommended, but not required, that you take this class after Comm 2321. Students who have not worked with AP Style before are responsible for the extra effort needed to write in this format and are encouraged to leverage resources listed in Carmen.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Students will recognize the critical role of strong writing in public relations.
- Students will solidify professional writing skills and learn to write 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, better understanding how professionals create messages.
- Students will grow their appreciation for the different career paths available in communication.

## COURSE TEXTS

Write Like a PR Pro, Mary Sterenberg: <https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/writelikeapro/> (This is a free, online textbook.)  
Recommended: The Associated Press Stylebook 2022-24. The Associated Press.

## HYBRID COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This course will have in-person and online components. Students should plan to attend IN-PERSON on Tuesdays and complete weekly assignments online. This course will include a group project. Group collaboration will often be done during class. However, students should expect to meet periodically outside of class to complete assignments. Additional things to note:

- You will need access to reliable Wi-Fi and take responsibility for ensuring you can access online resources such as discussion boards, video/audio materials and quizzes. Please refer to the resource center for additional support with Carmen and other online tools: <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmencanvas>
- All course materials and assignments will be posted weekly in Carmen. Additionally, I will post Announcements as needed to communicate updates, news and activities. We will also use Carmen during class for In-Class Writing.
- Bring a computer to in-person classes so you can access online materials, discussions and resources.
- Individual and Group Assignments will be **due SUNDAYS AT MIDNIGHT**. Any changes will be communicated in class and through Carmen.

## COURSE EVALUATION

Class Participation	100 points
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- Peer Reviews (50 points)
- In-Class Writing (50 points)

Application Assignments	200 points
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- Individual Application Assignments (70 points)
- Group Pivot Assignments (130 points)

Benchmark Assignment	150 points
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- Midterm (50 points)
- Brand Pivot Launch (50 points)
- Class Reflection Project (50 points)

<b>Total Possible Points</b>	<b>450 points</b>
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## 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

All assignments should follow AP Style and be **“Client-Ready.”** Client-ready means they are:

- Free from grammar and spelling mistakes
- Written for the intended audience
- Formatted appropriately for ease of reading, including layout
- Concise and to the point

## CLASS PARTICIPATION

### Peer Reviews (50 points)

During class, you will be given time to review your peers’ work. Each peer review is worth 5 points toward your final grade for a total of 50 points. In Carmen, you will be randomly assigned two peers. However, you only need to complete ONE for points.

### In-Class Writing (50 points)

During class, you will be given a prompt that relates to the lecture or topic we’re discussing that day. In-class writing should be approximately 150 words in length, thoroughly answer the question(s) posed during class, and follow appropriate grammar and AP style rules. Since I’m aware that you may miss classes due to sickness or excused activities, there will be 60 points available, with a max of 50 points awarded.

## APPLICATION ASSIGNMENTS

### Individual Application Assignments (100 points)

During weeks 1 - 6,, you will be assigned Individual Application Assignments. These projects are to be completed outside of class on your own. While we may have time in class to discuss topics, you will be required to **TURN IN YOUR OWN WORK**. **Application assignments open on Tuesdays and will be due at midnight on Sundays.**

### Group Pivot Assignments (150 points)

During weeks 7 - 12, you will be working in groups to build a Brand Pivot Strategy. Only ONE PERSON needs to turn in assignments for the group. However, everyone **MUST** contribute to this project. **Lack of consistent participation will result in redoing the assignment on your own and turning it in separately for a separate grade. After two missed group meetings in or outside of class, you may be asked to complete and present the Brand Pivot Launch Project ON YOUR OWN.**

## BENCHMARK ASSIGNMENTS

### Mid-term Exam (50 points)

During week 6, students will complete a mid-term exam measuring the understanding of course topics learned during weeks 1 - 6. The exam will open on Tuesday after class and must be completed by Sunday at midnight. Unless a student makes alternative plans in writing beforehand, students who do not complete the exam when it is assigned will automatically lose 10 points and will make up the exam during week 15.

### Group Brand Pivot Launch Strategy (50 points)

Using the information gathered in class, students will work together in their groups to prepare a Day 1 Launch Strategy. The goal is to prepare a real-world for plan announcing the brand pivot to key audiences through multiple PESO channels.

### Individual Class Reflection Project (50 points)

In lieu of a final exam, students will submit an analysis of the Brand Pivot project. A rubric will be provided that outlines the structure, requirements and grading. However, the overall purpose of this project is to think critically about what it means for a brand to dramatically change its strategic communication strategy.

**Extra Credit:** There are 10 extra credit points available in this class. Occasionally, I will award extra credit beyond these points to students for in-class activities as discussed in class. Extra credit will be applied to the final point total. *Submit all extra credit on Carmen by class during Week 15.*

- **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. If you have me for multiple classes, you may not count the same event for both classes. You may attend multiple events and submit a different event for each class.
- **Writing Workshop (3 points):** Students may choose to meet with me or to make an appointment with The Writing Center at OSU for a writing workshop. To achieve credit, you must submit three takeaways to improve your writing and list the date/time of your appointment and the name of the person you met with.
- **Brand Pivot Scenario (3 points):** Details for this extra credit assignment will be shared in class, added to Carmen and posted as an announcement. **This extra credit opportunity will only be available for ONE WEEK.** It will not be accepted if it is not turned in by the deadline.

### 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. However, illness and unexpected obligations do occur. The attendance policy for this class is to allow two excused absences. **Because Communication 3334 is a hybrid class that only meets once a week in person and requires group work during class time, it is important to attend class. If a student misses more than two classes, they risk losing points for in-class writing and peer reviews. This WILL lower your overall grade.** If you need to miss class due to sickness or other excused absences, please get notes from a classmate and ask whether in-class work can 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.

#### Weather or other short-term closing

Should in-person classes be canceled; we may meet virtually via CarmenZoom during our regularly scheduled time. I will share any updates via Carmen Announcement.

### **Using Generative Artificial Intelligence**

Generative artificial intelligence tools such as CoPilot or ChatGPT will help shape the future of work, research and technology but when used in the wrong way, they can stand in conflict with academic integrity at Ohio State. Students are responsible for the accuracy and quality of the results used via AI. AI transparency is also valued; students should be clear about when AI is being used and may be asked to share prompts, conversations or results.

### **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.

### **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 3335-5-48.7 (B)). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct.

**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.**

### **Disability Services**

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. 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.

If you are ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of a viral infection or fever, please let me know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; or [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu).

## **Religious Accommodations**

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office. (Policy: Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances)

## **Intellectual Diversity**

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

## **Mental Health**

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 or someone you know are 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](https://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 and 24 hour emergency help is also available 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

### **Creating an Environment Free From Harrassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct**

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office:

- Online reporting form at <http://civilrights.osu.edu/>,
- Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,
- Or Email [civilrights@osu.edu](mailto:civilrights@osu.edu)

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Civil Rights Compliance Office to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.
- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

### **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 Monda Student Resource Center in the Younkin Success Center (1640 Neil Ave, Columbus, Ohio). Check the website or call for current hours.

## Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

	Topic	In-Class	Application
<b>Week 1</b> 8/26	Course Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Syllabus + Policies</li> <li>- Defining Strategic Communication, Discovery + PESO</li> </ul>	<b>Individual Application 1:</b> Personal Inventory
<b>Week 2</b> 9/2	<b>Key Concepts:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Discovery Process</li> <li>- The PESO Model</li> <li>- Client-Ready</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effective Discovery tools</li> <li>- Using Discovery to influence strategic communication, message design, brand development and implementation</li> </ul>	<b>Individual Application 2:</b> Personal Branding
<b>Week 3</b> 9/9	<b>Discovery Tools:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audience Analysis</li> <li>Landscape Analysis</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defining a target audience</li> <li>- Building a target audience avatar</li> <li>- Collecting industry research</li> <li>- Uncovering trends</li> </ul>	<b>Individual Application 3:</b> Audience Analysis and Landscape Analysis
<b>Week 4</b> 9/16	<b>Discovery Tools:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitive Analysis</li> <li>Key Audience</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conducting a Competitive Analysis</li> <li>- Distilling key messages</li> <li>- Writing with clarity</li> </ul>	<b>Individual Application 4:</b> Competitive Analysis and Key Messaging
<b>Week 5</b> 9/23	<b>SWOT Analysis + PESO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is a SWOT Analysis</li> <li>- Why is a SWOT useful</li> <li>- What is the PESO Model</li> <li>- Identifying examples of PESO</li> </ul>	<b>Individual Application 5:</b> Brand PESO Audit
<b>Week 6</b> 9/30	<b>PESO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Using Discovery findings to direct PESO</li> <li>- Selecting appropriate PESO tools</li> <li>- Key messaging and PESO</li> </ul>	<b>Individual Application 6:</b> Mid-Term Exam
	<b>Brand Pivot</b>		
<b>Week 7</b> 10/7	<b>Brand Pivot</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define communication objectives</li> <li>- Begin Client Discovery</li> </ul>	<b>Group Application 1:</b> Audience and Landscape Analysis
<b>Week 8</b> 10/14	<b>Key Message Building</b>	<b>Messaging</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building a message map</li> <li>- Applying key messages to PESO</li> </ul>	<b>Group Application 2:</b> Message Map
<b>Week 9</b> 10/21	<b>Owned Media</b>	<b>Copywriting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing for the Web</li> <li>- Corporate Videos and Podcast</li> <li>- Newsletters and Blogs</li> </ul>	<b>Group Application 3:</b> Owned Media
<b>Week 10</b> 10/28	<b>Shared Media</b>	<b>Social Media Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing compelling content</li> <li>- Community management</li> <li>- Engagement + measurement</li> </ul>	<b>Group Application 4:</b> Shared Media
<b>Week 11</b> 11/4	<b>Earned + Paid Media</b>	<b>Media Relations and Advertising</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding the difference between paid and earned media</li> <li>- Garnering media interest</li> <li>- Building an advertising campaign</li> </ul>	<b>Group Application 5:</b> Earned Media



<b>Week 12</b> 11/11	<b>Veteran's Day</b> - No Classes -	<b>Begin assembling on your Brand Pivot Launch Strategy</b>	<b>Group Application 6:</b> Paid Media
<b>Week 13</b> 11/18	<b>Team Work Day</b>	- Work with your team to Brand Pivot Launch Strategy	<b>Individual Final Project:</b> Reflection Project
<b>Week 14</b> 11/25	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b> - No Classes -	- Finalize your presentation with your team - Complete your Class Reflection Project	<b>Group Final Project:</b> Brand Pivot Launch Strategy
<b>Week 15</b> 12/2	<b>Presentations</b>	Client Presentations Peer and Group Reviews	<b>Client Presentation:</b> Each group delivers a 10-minute recap of their Brand Pivot
<b>Week 16</b> 12/9	<b>SUBMIT:</b> - Class Insight Project - Peer Review - Group Review		