

Write Like a PR Pro

COMM 3334 - HYBRID

Strategic Message Design

Fall 2019

Wed. 10:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m. Journalism 342 – Section 17603

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-2:30 p.m., by appointment

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 readings/assignments/quizzes before class is necessary.** The best way to improve your writing is to write. A lot. So we'll be writing both in and out of class this semester.

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. If you ever notice a broken link or other issue, please let me know so I can correct it. It's one of the benefits – and curses – to using the online, open-source textbook.)

HYBRID COURSE EXPECTATIONS

In the School of Communication, the hybrid structure means 2/3 of the class time is in-class teaching and learning, and 1/3 of the class time is online teaching and learning. Please be aware of the following expectations for participation in this course structure:

- It is imperative that you attend the in-person day of class each week (see “Attendance & Late Policy” below)
- You must 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, as one-third of our class is conducted online. 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. Assignments will not be accepted late regardless of problems with Wi-Fi access and other technical difficulties. Refer to <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmencanvas> for answers to many Carmen problems or questions for the Carmen support team.
- You must be active in Carmen, which means accessing our course online multiple times per week as I only see you once a week 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/quizzes/assignments 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.
- Bring a computer to class or a flash drive with plans to use the provided computers in the classroom so you can access online materials, discussions and resources.

COURSE EVALUATION

In-class writing/application	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 submitted electronically via Carmen and should follow AP style guidelines, unless otherwise instructed. Check Carmen for complete assignment sheets with rubrics.

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 in class 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. **Assignments completed in class cannot be made up regardless of the reason for absence. If you know you will miss class for an excused reason, talk to me IN ADVANCE about options for completing the assignment.**

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 must be completed by start of class on the date listed on the syllabus. There are no make-up quizzes. 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 in class 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 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. 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 in-class group work, 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. Internships are jobs also don’t permit arriving late or leaving early, and this class is no different. If you arrive more than five minutes late or leave more than five minutes early without a documented reason, it will be counted as an absence (however, you may complete any in-class assignments as time permits and receive credit.)

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.

Office Hours & Email

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.

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, 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.

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/>

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.

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 Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, 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 these 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 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities

Requesting accommodations

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. 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.

DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to alter the scheduled topics as the semester progresses. These changes will be announced in class.

Tentative Course Schedule

Part 1: PR Planning & Writing Basics

Note: All Read/Watch/Complete items should be done before the start of the class where listed

Week 1 8/21	Why Writing Matters/Professional Inventory Cornerstones of Communication (Ch. 1)	
Week 2 8/28	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 9/4	Understanding Branding Identifying Audiences and Objectives	SUBMIT: Discussion Post #1 (post due by midnight 9/1, responses due by start of class)
Week 4 9/11	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 9/18	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 9/15, responses due by start of class)
Week 6 9/25	Newsletter/Article Writing Client Project: analysis of owned media	COMPLETE: Quiz #4: Hootsuite Certification SUBMIT: Blog post
Week 7 10/2	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 10/9	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 10/6, responses due by start of class)
Week 9 10/16	Video (Ch. 10)	READ: Chapter 10 COMPLETE: Quiz #7 SUBMIT: Social Media Strategy/Content
Week 10 10/23	Visual Messaging (Ch. 11) Design/Infographics	READ: Chapter 11 WATCH: Design Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #8
Week 11 10/30	Paid media writing: Advertising/Fliers Client Project: analysis of paid media	WATCH: Advertising Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #9 SUBMIT: Discussion Post #4 (post due by midnight 10/27, responses due by start of class)
Week 12 11/6	Earned Media Writing: Finding/Making News (Ch. 12 & 13) Media Advisories	READ: Chapters 12, 13 WATCH: Finding/Making News Lecture COMPLETE: Quiz #10
Week 13 11/13	News Releases/Pitching Client Presentation Development	WATCH: News Release Lecture SUBMIT: Media Advisory
Week 14 11/20	Client Project and Collateral Workshop	SUBMIT: Client Collateral Item
Week 15 11/27	THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS	
Week 16 12/4	Client Project Presentations	