



**GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY**  
**School of Continuing Studies**  
*Public Relations and Corporate Communications*

**Public Relations Writing (MPPR 700-101)**

**Dates:** August 31 to December 20, 2016

**Location:** Online

**Faculty:** Cylor Spaulding, Ph.D.

**Virtual Office Hours:** By appointment through Canvas Conference. Contact me by email to set up an appointment.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

A core strength of any successful communications professional is a solid understanding of what is newsworthy, coupled with strong writing skills. This course is designed to help students develop professional writing skills expected of PR practitioners, and covers the strategy and style of many forms of public relations writing, including press releases, media correspondence, media advisories, fact sheets, and talking points. Good writing takes practice, hard work, discipline, focus and persistence. Students will learn to organize and plan their writing both with and without deadline pressure. Successful students will be able to continue in their PR career or pursue a job in public relations with the assurance that they have had professional exposure to a breadth of writing that will serve them well in their professional lives.

**REQUIREMENTS**

**Required Textbooks and Readings**

You are required to purchase two books for this class. You may purchase them from the university bookstore ([www.georgetown.bncollege.com](http://www.georgetown.bncollege.com)) or most other online retailers. Electronic versions of the books can also be purchased directly from the publishers ([www.apstylebook.com](http://www.apstylebook.com) and [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)). These are the required books for the course:

Flowers, A. (2016). *Global writing for Public Relations: Connecting in English with stakeholders and publics worldwide*. New York: Routledge.

- ISBN: 978-0415748841
- MSRP: \$69.95

Associated Press. (2016). *Associated Press Stylebook*

- ISBN: 978-0-917360-63-3
- MSRP: \$18.95

### **Articles and Chapters**

All articles, book excerpts, cases, and multimedia listed on the course schedule will be distributed in advance via Canvas. Readings not included in the initial syllabus will be provided later in the semester, so we can review real-time cases and current events.

### **Recommended Readings**

You are encouraged become regular consumers of both mainstream news and industry news. Key industry news outlets are Public Relations Tactics, PRWeek, The Public Relations Strategist, and PRNews.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Research Guide**

The PRCC program has an extensive online Research Guide designed for the subject and research specifications of our program. This Guide will give you direct access to the library resources central to your course research work <http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/prcc>

### **Georgetown Library**

Students enrolled in online School of Continuing Studies SCS coursework have access to the University Library System's eResources, including 500+ research databases, 1.5+ million ebooks, and thousands of periodicals and other multimedia files (films, webinars, music, and images). Students can access these resources through the [Library's Homepage](#) by using their University username (NetID) and password (this is the same login information used to access email). The Library does not mail physical items to students.

SCS students may make an appointment with a librarian to discuss a research topic, develop a search strategy, or examine resources for projects and papers. Librarians offer an overview of and in-depth assistance with important resources for senior or master's theses, dissertations, papers and other types of research. Appointments are conducted using Google Hangout

(video-conferencing function) through the Georgetown Gmail System or by telephone. This service is available to currently enrolled students who need assistance with Georgetown-assigned projects and papers. Please review the [Services & Resources Guide for Online Students](#) for additional information.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should know how to:

- Recognize what is newsworthy and important to be communicated
- Explain how writing for a purpose and target public drives message construction
- Demonstrate strong professional writing skills for various forms of public relations writing
- Produce various forms of public relations print and electronic communications
- Produce strong public relations writing with and without deadline pressure
- Demonstrate a written ability to connect with diverse audiences

## STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

This course consists of 15 modules. You are expected to do the readings, watch the lecture videos, and to otherwise engage the material presented on the course website.

Your responsibilities include taking the module quizzes, completing the module deliverables, and turning in the revised final documents and project plan.

Participation is essential to your success in this class. In distance education courses you are required to participate just as if you were in a face-to-face course. This means that in order to get full credit for participation, you will have to complete all of your module assignments and quizzes.

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

### **Canvas**

Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies (SCS) uses Canvas as its Learning Management System. This course will be taught entirely through the Canvas platform. To learn more about Canvas, please go through the [Canvas Guide for Students](#).

## **Communication with Peers**

You will be expected to communicate with your peers via the discussion board.

### **Email**

In this course we will use Canvas to send email for private messages. You can either check your messages in the Canvas system or set your notifications to your preferred method of contact. Please check your messages at least once per day. When submitting messages, please do the following:

- Put a subject in the subject box that describes the email content with your name and module.
- Do not send messages asking general information about the class, please post those in the question forum.

### **Questions**

In online courses, everyone will likely have many questions about things that relate to the course, such as clarification about assignments, course materials, or assessments. Please post these in the NEED HELP? question forum, which you can access by clicking the DISCUSSIONS button in the course navigation links. This is an open forum, and you are encouraged to give answers and help each other.

### **Turnaround / Feedback**

If you have a concern and send me a message, you can expect a response within 2 business days. Please allow 3 business days for assessment submission feedback.

### **Netiquette Guidelines**

To promote the highest degree of education possible, we ask each student to respect the opinions and thoughts of other students and be courteous in the way that you choose to express yourself. The topics in this course are often controversial and promote debate. Students should be respectful and considerate of all opinions.

In order for us to have meaningful discussions, we must learn to genuinely try to understand what others are saying and be open-minded about others' opinions. If you want to persuade someone to see things differently, it is much more effective to do so in a polite, non-threatening way rather than to do so antagonistically. Everyone has insights to offer based on his/her experiences, and we can all learn from each other. Civility is essential.

**Participation -- 18% of Final Grade**

**Due:** Modules 1 - 13 -- Class Discussions and Activities

Success in this class is dependent on active participation in discussions and activities. Our goal is not to memorize the material supplied in the readings but to understand how it can be applied effectively. To that end, you will be required to participate in class discussions and activities during each module. Your contributions should show clear understanding of the readings and subjects at hand; apply a framework or criteria for analyzing a topic; and/or help make connections among ideas, readings, or experiences we discuss. You will also engage with the instructor and your fellow classmates in active discussions designed to enhance your own learning experience and those of your fellow classmates. You may earn up to five points for your participation in each module, including the orientation module, this includes both your discussion board responses and your comments to your peer.

*Discussion Board* - You will be presented with a prompt meant to spur your thinking about the readings and activities for each module. Your responses to these prompts will require you to synthesize and apply all that you have learned during that module. In order to fulfill the requirements for the discussion posts, you will also be required to respond to two of your peers' posts.

**AP Style Quizzes (5) -- 7% of Final Grade**

**Due:** Modules 1 - 5

AP Style quizzes are meant to help you become familiar with using the Associated Press style in your writing. This style is commonly used across the journalism and PR industries. There will be five quizzes of five multiple choice questions. Though there will only be five quizzes, you are still responsible for knowing and incorporating AP Style into all your assignments in this course. Each quiz is worth five points.

**Content Quizzes (6) -- 15% of Final Grade**

**Due:** Modules 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 13

There are six content quizzes during the course, which are meant to test your knowledge of the assigned readings for the module. The quizzes will cover the assigned readings for that particular module. Each quiz will be 10 multiple choice or true/false questions.

**Assignments (14) -- 35% of Final Grade**

**Due:** Modules 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, & 12

There are 14 written assignments meant to enable you to apply your knowledge of public relations writing in different contexts. The assignments will cover types of writing you are most likely to encounter during your career as a public relations professional. There will be two assignments for the key elements of a media kit (news releases, fact sheets, backgrounders, and bios/profiles), by-lined articles, and advertorials. The first assignment for each of these will be graded on a pass/fail basis, and you will pass the assignment as long as you have fulfilled

the assignment criteria and put forth a good effort to complete it to the best of your ability. The second assignment for those topics will be graded. The pitching assignment and the media alert assignment will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Each assignment is worth 10 points.

- News Releases Assignment 1 & 2
- Fact Sheet Assignment 1 & 2
- Backgrounder Assignment 1 & 2
- Bio/profile Assignment 1 & 2
- Pitching Assignment
- Media Alert Assignment
- By-lined Article Assignment 1 & 2
- Advertorial Assignment 1 & 2

### **Final Project – 25% of Final Grade**

**Due:** End of Module 15

The final project is designed to allow you to synthesize and apply all your knowledge from the semester. For the final project, you will be asked to create a media kit for a fictional or a real client. The media kit should include one of each of the following: news release, fact sheet, bio/profile, and a backgrounder. The specifics of the topic and client will be given to you in module 13.

### **GRADING**

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. There are no grades of C+, C- or D.

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Participation	18% (70 points)
AP Style Quizzes	7% (25 points)
Content Quizzes	15% (60 points)
Assignments	35% (140 points)
Final Project	25% (100 points)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100% (395 points)</b>

### **Grading Scheme**

- 93 - 100 % = A
- 90 - 92 % = A-
- 87 - 89 % = B+
- 83 - 86 % = B
- 80 - 82 % = B-

70 - 79 % = C  
Below 70 % = F

### **Assignment Submission & Homework and Make-up Policy**

All assignments are expected to be turned in on or before the due date, unless prior approval is obtained from the instructor. Prior approval means the student has communicated with the instructor before the assignment deadline. Late assignments that are turned in during the week following the due date will receive a 50% point deduction from the graded total. No credit will be given for any assignment that is submitted more than one week after the due date. Quizzes taken after the due date will not receive any credit.

Work is due by the due dates set in Canvas.

### **ABSENCES**

The instructor will count a student as “absent” in any week in which the student fails to submit any of the assignments due that week, including discussion postings, knowledge checks, and/or writing assignments.

After the student accumulates two such “absent” weeks, the student will receive a failing grade in this course, regardless of grades earned in any other assignment.

### **MAKE-UP POLICY**

In this course, no sort of make-up or missed work is accommodated. Please know that in order to be excused from an exam or from any assignment you must have a doctor’s excuse and permission from your Dean, and/or have secured my permission well in advance.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations to ensure equity and access to programs and facilities. Students are responsible for communicating their needs to the Academic Resource Center, the office that oversees disability support services. The University

is not responsible for making special accommodations for students who have not declared their disabilities and have not requested an accommodation in a timely manner. Also, the University need not modify course or degree requirements considered to be an essential requirement of the program of instruction. For the most current and up-to-date policy information, please refer to the [Georgetown University Academic Resource Center website](#). Students are highly encouraged to discuss the documentation and accommodation process with an Academic Resource Center administrator.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor Pledge, you are required to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of the course, especially on exams and papers. The instructor is aware of and regularly consults all of the major Internet sources for plagiarized assignments. Thus, you are hereby cautioned to follow the letter and the spirit of the Standards of Conduct outlined in the [Georgetown Honor Code](#). If you have any questions about conforming to rules regarding plagiarism or about the proper format for citations, consult the instructor. The first instance of plagiarism will result in an incomplete on that assignment. Any further instance of plagiarism will result in an incomplete for the course.

## COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

Students need to have sufficient technology and Internet access to complete this course.

Here are the requirements listed by Canvas:

### **Operating Systems**

- Windows XP SP3 and newer
- Mac OS X 10.6 and newer
- Linux - chromeOS

### **Mobile Operating System Native App Support**

- iOS 7 and newer
- Android 2.3 and newer

### **Computer Speed and Processor**

- Use a computer 5 years old or newer when possible
- 1GB of RAM



- 2GHz processor

### **Internet Speed**

- Along with compatibility and web standards, Canvas has been carefully crafted to accommodate low bandwidth environments.
- Minimum of 512kbps

## TECHNICAL SUPPORT

### **Technical Skills**

As an online student your "classroom" experience will be very different than a traditional student. As part of your online experience, you can expect to utilize a variety of technologies, such as:

1. Communicate via email including sending attachments
2. Navigate the internet using a Web browser
3. Use office applications such as Microsoft Office or Google Docs to create documents
4. Learn how to communicate using a discussion board and upload assignments to a classroom Web site
5. Upload and download saved files
6. Have easy access to the Internet
7. Navigate Canvas, including using the email component within Canvas.

You can also search for Technical Support answers in the following guides:

### **Canvas**

Click on the Help link (on top-right of page in Canvas) to reach Canvas Support, including the [Canvas Student Guide](#) and 24 hour Canvas Support Hotline at 855-338-2770.

### **Google Apps**

Use of Georgetown University-issued accounts (Links to an external site.) for Google Mail, Calendar, Groups, Talk, Docs, Sites, Video, and Contacts is governed by the contract between Georgetown University and Google. For help managing your Google Documents, visit Google Drive Help Center (Links to an external site.)

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

## [Services & Resources for Online Students @ the School of Continuing Studies](#)

Students enrolled in online School of Continuing Studies SCS coursework have access to the University Library System's eResources, including 500+ research databases, 1.5+ million ebooks, and thousands of periodicals and other multimedia files (films, webinars, music, and images). Students can access these resources through the [Library's Homepage](#) by using their University username (NetID) and password (this is the same login information used to access email, BlackBoard, etc.). The Library does not mail physical items to students.

SCS students may make an appointment with a librarian to discuss a research topic, develop a search strategy, or examine resources for projects and papers. Librarians offer an overview of and in-depth assistance with important resources for senior or master's theses, dissertations, papers and other types of research. Appointments are conducted using Google Hangout (video-conferencing function) through the Georgetown Gmail System or by telephone. This service is available to currently enrolled students who need assistance with Georgetown-assigned projects and papers. Please review the [Services & Resources Guide for Online Students](#) for additional information.

## COURSE CONTENT OUTLINE

This course is divided into 15 modules. Below is an outline for each module.

### ORIENTATION (August 28 - September 4)

Please take a moment to go through the orientation module, as it will provide you with useful information about how to navigate the course. One thing to note is that each module is released at 12 a.m. on Mondays. You will be unable to work ahead of that module release. Please also take some time create a short introduction video of yourself that provides the following information: 1) your name and location, 2) the school you received your last degree from and your major, 3) your experience in the communications/PR industry, 4) what you hope to do with your graduate degree, and 5) what period in history would you want to live in and why.

**Assignments:** Post a video introduction of yourself responding to these questions on the discussion board.

### MODULE 1: Introduction: What is Public Relations Writing? (September 5-11)

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Introduce and explain the importance of writing in public relations
- Describe the international landscape of the public relations industry
- Introduce Associated Press Style and identify its role in PR writing

#### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 12-51, Flowers; “Why Learn AP Style” article; “Spin Doctors or Word Doctors” article

**Participate** in synchronous session

**Complete** the content quiz

**Complete** the AP style quiz

**Participate** in discussion boards

### MODULE 2: Writing From an Intercultural Perspective (September 12-18)

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Define cultural literacy
- Explain the global media and Public Relations landscape
- Explain diversity, bias, and cultural sensitivity
- Identify the best practices for writing to communicate in English within a global marketplace

#### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 52-128, Flowers

**Watch** “Communicating across Cultures” video series on Lynda.com

**Complete** the content quiz

**Complete** the AP style quiz

**Participate** in discussion boards

### MODULE 3: Grammar and Writing (September 19-25)

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain the importance of grammar and punctuation in writing and Public Relations writing
- Identify and review some basic elements of grammar and writing

#### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 161-231, Flowers

**Complete** the content quiz

**Complete** the AP Style quiz

**Participate** in discussion boards

## MODULE 4: Storytelling, Strategy, and Messaging (September 26-October 2)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify how storytelling fits into public relations
- Review and explain how to develop messages, strategies and tactics

### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 129-160, Flowers; Wilson, L. J., & Ogden, J. D. (2015). Strategic communications: Planning for public relations and marketing. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt. pp. 123-150

**Complete** the content quiz

**Complete** the AP Style quiz

**Participate** in discussion boards

## MODULE 5: Online Newsrooms and Writing for the Internet (October 3-9)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Identify online newsrooms and their purpose
- Introduce and explain different media kit components
- Identify “best practices” for writing public relations content for the Internet and social media

### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 263-293 and pp. 333-356, Flowers; “Rise of the Chatbots” article; “Why Communicators Can’t Waste Time Getting Up to Speed on Chatbots” article

**Watch** the synchronous session

**Complete** the content quiz

**Complete** the AP style quiz

**Participate** in discussion boards

## MODULE 6: Building a Media Kit: News Releases (October 10-16)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain the purpose of a news release
- Identify “best practices” for creating an effective news release
- Write an effective news release

### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 235-262, Flowers; “A Creative Mix of Old and New” article

**Watch** the News release animated voiceover

**Complete** the News release assignment 1 & 2

**Participate** in discussion boards

## MODULE 7: Building a Media Kit: Fact Sheets (October 17-23)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain how fact sheets are used
- Identify “best practices” for creating an effective fact sheet
- Write an effective fact sheet

### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 277-281, Flowers; Fact sheet text with graphics

**Attend** the synchronous session

**Complete** the fact sheet assignment 1 and 2

**Participate** in discussion boards

## MODULE 8: Building a Media Kit: Backgrounders (October 24-30)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the purpose of a backgrounder
- Identify “best practices” for creating an effective backgrounder

- Write an effective backgrounder

#### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** review pp. 285-287, Flowers; Backgrounders text with graphics

**Watch** the lecture

**Complete** the backgrounder assignment 1 and 2

**Participate** in discussion boards

### MODULE 9: Building a Media Kit: Bios/Profiles (October 31-November 6)

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain the purpose of bios/profiles
- Identify “best practices” for creating an effective bios/profiles
- Write an effective bio/profile

#### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Review** pp. 281-285, Flowers; Bios/Profiles text with graphics

**Attend** synchronous session

**Complete** the bios/profiles assignments 1 and 2

**Participate** in discussion boards

### MODULE 10: Media Relations: Pitches and Media Alerts (November 7-13)

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the purpose of a media pitch and a media alert
- Identify “best practices” for creating effective media pitches and alerts
- Write an effective media pitch and media alert

#### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 294-323, Flowers

**Watch** Pitches animated voiceovers and Interview with Solvej Schou

**Complete** the pitching assignment

**Complete** the media alert assignment

**Participate** in discussion boards

## MODULE 11: Advocacy Writing: Letters to the Editor, Op-eds, and By-lined Articles (November 14-20)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain the purpose of advocacy style writing
- Describe the different types of advocacy writing
- Write an effective piece of advocacy writing

### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 323-330 & 370-377, Flowers; “Putting the ‘Art’ in Article” article; “How to Create the Perfect Public Service Announcement” article

**Watch** By-lined article animated voiceover

**Complete** by-lined article assignment 1 and 2

**Participate** in discussion boards

## MODULE 12: Controlled Content & Brand Journalism (November 21-27)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Define brand journalism
- Explain the different types of brand journalism
- Write an effective advertorial

### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 379-403, Flowers; “The Real Thing,” article; “Powering a Reputation” article; “What’s the Difference Between a Mat Release and a Press Release Article” article; “How to Write a Mat Release” article; Advertorial text with graphics

**Watch** the lecture and synchronous session

**Complete** advertorial assignment 1 and 2

**Participate** in discussion boards

## MODULE 13: Business Writing (November 28-December 4)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain the different types of writing public relations conducts to support business functions

#### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Read** pp. 405-459, Flowers

**Read** through the final project assignment

**Complete** the content quiz

**Participate** in discussion boards

#### MODULE 14: Final Project Review & Meeting with the Professor (December 5 - 11)

#### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Review** your final project

**Complete** the survey

**Meet** your instructor

#### MODULE 15: Final Project (December 12 - 18)

#### ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

**Submit** your Final Project