Public Relations Writing (MPPR 700-140)

Dates: May 19 – August 19, 2017

Location: Online

Faculty: Rebecca B. Andersen, APR, M.S. IMC

Virtual Office Hours: By appointment only. Contact me by email to set up an appointment.

The complete syllabus is available in PDF (for download). If you do not have the free Adobe Reader to view the PDF file, please download at Adobe Reader (Links to an external site.).

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 you 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. You 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.

COURSE-LEVEL 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

REQUIRED READINGS

Textbook

You are required to purchase two books for this class. You may purchase them from the university bookstore (www.georgetown.bncollege.com (Links to an external site.) or most other online retailers. Electronic versions of the books can also be purchased directly from the publishers (www.apstylebook.com (Links to an external site.)) and (www.routledge.com (Links to an external site)). 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 posted to our course in 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*.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Technical Requirements

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:

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 submit assignments in Canvas
5. Communicate with peers using discussion boards and other platforms
6. Upload and download saved files
7. Have easy access to the Internet
8. Navigate Canvas, including using the email component within Canvas
9. Use a microphone to record audio through your computer
10. Use an internal or external camera to record video through your computer

In this course we will use Zoom and TurnItIn.

- Zoom enables users to conduct synchronous ("real-time") conferences, presentations, lectures, meetings, office hours and group chats via audio, video, text chat and content sharing. Technical support for Zoom is available via Georgetown here.
- TurnItIn is a writing assessment tool that is used to detect plagiarism and allows teachers to provide assignment feedback to students. Technical support for TurnItIn is available via TurnItIn Support Services here.

Computer Requirements

Students need to have sufficient technology and Internet access to complete this course. The requirements are listed by Canvas in the Infrastructure Guides.

Audio and Video Capability

- You will need an internal or external microphone. Most computers now come with them built in.
- You will need an internal or external camera. Most computers now come with them built in.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This course is conducted entirely online, which means students do not have to be on campus to complete any portion of it. Students will participate in the course using Georgetown University's online learning management system called Canvas. Each Module will be released on a weekly basis every Friday at 11:59 pm (ET). Students are required to move through each module in sequential order.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

This course consists of 13 modules. You are expected to do the readings, watch the lecture videos, join synchronous sessions 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.

Time Expectations

Our online classes are designed to meet the same academic standards as our place-based (face-to-face) courses. You can think of each module equal to the same level of participation, commitment, and academic rigor as a face-to-face class. You should plan on spending approximately 10-12 hours per week on the work for each online module.

Absences

There are no excused absences in an online course. 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 participating in online discussions, quizzes, assignments, and/or activities.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code.

The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Plagiarism

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in the workplace, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing, and the need to credit, check out Plagiarism.org.

REQUIRED COURSE ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

These assignments are designed to help students think critically and independently about the issues raised in the reading. These will be graded on a standard scale from A to F. Grades in the B and C range will be common and normal; only truly excellent work will receive the highest grades. Do not, however, worry if your initial grades are low, since we are looking for significant improvement from the beginning to the end of the class.

Written work is due by the assigned due date on Canvas. You must submit your weekly written assignment online by the time assigned in Canvas; DO NOT SEND YOUR PAPERS TO OTHER PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL EMAIL ADDRESSES.

Work will only be accepted late if there is a legitimate reason for the delay, such as a medical issue, a household emergency, serious family illness, or death. All reasons will remain confidential. Students are urged to request extensions in advance of the due date if they anticipate that this will be a problem. Follow-ups and class participation is contingent on the timely submission of your initial responses.

Assignments

Participation -- 18% of Final Grade

Due: Modules 1 - 10 -- 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 in total) -- 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 in total) -- 15% of Final Grade
Due: Modules 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 10
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 in total) -- 35% of Final Grade
Due: Modules 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, & 11
There are 14 written assignments meant to enable to you to apply your knowledge of public relations writing 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.

- *Peer Reviewed Assignments* - These will be the first assignments in modules 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. You will receive 5 points for completing the assignment according to the instructions and with all the core components, and you will receive another 5 points for reviewing a peer's assignment in-depth. When reviewing your peer's assignment, you are expected to constructively analyze their work and provide detailed feedback to help them improve the assignment. The instructor may also provide feedback if he/she feels more feedback is necessary. Your assignment must be submitted each Tuesday night, and you must review your

peer's assignment by Thursday night.

- *Graded Assignments* - These will be the second assignments in 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. These assignments will be graded based on whether all core components were included and instructions were followed, the quality of the content, grammar, punctuation, and proofreading. The pitching assignment and the media alert assignment in module 10 will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Each assignment is worth 10 points.

Final Project – 25% of Final Grade
Due: End of Module 13
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.

Citation Style

This course uses APA or Chicago style for all writing and research assignments. Resources for this citation style are available through

Georgetown Library Citation Style Guide (Links to an external site.)

APA Guidebook (Links to an external site.)

Chicago Guidebook (Links to an external site.)

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)

Total: 100%   **(395 points)**

Grading Scheme

93 - 100 % = A

90 - 92 % = A-

87 - 89 % = B+

83 - 86 % = B

80 - 82 % = B-

70 - 79 % = C

Below 70 % = F

ACCOMMODATIONS

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 (Links to an external site.), 202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. 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.

Tools Accessibility

- Technical support for VoiceThread
- Technical support for TurnItIn

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Support Services

SCS offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed online, at the School of Continuing Studies downtown location, and on the main Georgetown campus:

- **Academic Resource Center**
- 202-687-8354 | arc@georgetown.edu
- **Counseling and Psychiatric Services**
- 202-687-6985
  Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action (IDEAA)
- (202) 687-4798

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, 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.

Research Guide

The Public Relations and Corporate Communications program has an extensive online Library 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.

Learning Resources

SCS offers a host of learning resources to its students. Two that you might find particularly helpful in this course are the Writing Center and Refworks.

- The Writing Center (Links to an external site) offers professional writing support through its online peer tutoring service.
- Refworks (Links to an external site) is an online research management tool that aids in organizing, storing, and presenting citation sources for papers and projects.

Technical Support

Click on the Help link (on the bottom-left corner in Canvas) to reach Canvas Support, including the Canvas Student Guide and 24 hour Canvas Support Hotline at 855-338-2770.

COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES

'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 can be 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.

Statement of Student Conduct, Civility, and Engagement

The School of Continuing Studies offers students the opportunity to engage with faculty, staff, and peers in ways that foster intellectual growth and development in their chosen field of study. It is important to recognize that each member of our community brings his or her own values, thoughts, perspectives, and experiences into each interaction. We expect students to behave in a manner that is civil and respectful of others, and appreciate the learning opportunities that come from engaging pluralistic perspectives in a dynamic educational environment.

Engagement within the SCS Georgetown community takes places in on-campus meeting spaces and classrooms, and extends to online learning platforms and forums. Students should be particularly mindful that participation in class discussions, group assignments, emails, blogs, and social media reflect upon them personally, academically, and professionally. All viewpoints, editorials, and opinions expressed by students represent those students exclusively – and not the students' instructors, classmates, academic program, School, or University – even in cases when students are using Georgetown-affiliated systems like email, blogs, and online portfolios. The expectations for respect and civility are consistent for on-campus classes and spaces, as well as cyber, virtual, and online environments. Thus, civility and cybercivility are expected of all students, in all campus spaces.

SCS students are expected to adhere to the SCS guidelines for student conduct and the University Code of Student Conduct. In the event that a student's behavior is perceived to fall outside the stated SCS guidelines or may be a violation of the Code of Student Conduct, the matter may be referred to the Office of Student

Conduct for further review and possible sanctioning. Such instances can include but are not limited to: disruption of official university functions (including teaching, research, and administration), failure to comply with a directive issued by a University official, harassment and bullying, and incivility. For questions regarding the SCS student conduct expectations please review the policy in-full found in the Graduate Professional Studies Student Handbook (Links to an external site.). For questions about the Code of Student Conduct, please review the information provided by the Office of Student Conduct (Links to an external site.).

Communication with Peers

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

Notifications

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 General Questions Open Forum.

Questions Forum

In online courses, everyone will likely have many questions about things that relate to the course, such as clarification about assignments and course materials. Please post these in the General Questions Open Forum, which you can access from the landing page. This is an open forum, and you are encouraged to give answers and help each other.

Turnaround and 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.

COURSE CONTENT OUTLINE

This course is divided into 13 modules. Below is an outline for each module.

ORIENTATION (May 19-21)

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 was a memorable event in your life 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? (May 21-28)

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 (May 28-June 4)

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 (June 4-11)
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 (June 11-18)

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 (June 18-25)
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; "Best Practices for Crafting Social Media Posts" on Lynda.com
Complete the content quiz
Complete the AP style quiz
Participate in discussion boards

MODULE 6: Building a Media Kit: News Releases (June 25-July 2)

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 (July 2-9)
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 (July 9-16)
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 (July 16-23)
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 (July 23-30)
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 (July 30-August 6)
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 (August 6-13)
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 (August 13-20)
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

Read pp. 405-459, Flowers
Submit through the final project assignment
Complete the content quiz
Participate in discussion boards