

COM 316: Communication Techniques for Public Relations

Time: Mon & Weds, 3:00pm to 4:15pm
Location: Winston Hall 133

Professor: Dr. Richard Waters
rdwaters@ncsu.edu
Office: 230 Winston
Office Hours: Weds 4:30 — 6:00 pm
and by appointment
AIM: WatersNCSU

Description

This course is an intensive workshop in public relations writing that is diverse in style, ranging from brief public service announcements to news releases to persuasive speeches and executive presentations. Practitioners contend that writing is the foundation of professional public relations since most formal organizational communications begin or intersect with the written word. Thus, practitioners must be polished and capable writers, skilled in diverse forms and styles of writing and capable of working quickly. This course will be a combination of lectures, in-class, and out-of-class writing assignments that will simulate the realities of the professional writing environment for public relations professionals.

Prerequisites

To enroll in the course, you must have received a grade of C or better in COM 226 (Introduction to Public Relations). Proficiency in word processing is also required. Familiarity with visual design is helpful, but not necessary.

Required Texts and Materials

- 1) Wilcox, D. (2005). *Public relations: Writing and media techniques*. Boston: Pearson.
- 2) Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (a recent edition).

Objectives

The objective of this course is to master the basic writing skills of the public relations professional, both in terms of style and content. Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the role of writing in the public relations process
- Incorporate strategic objectives into any public relations writing project
- Create public relations material appropriate for diverse publics and situations
- Produce on deadline any number of written public relations tools

Course Professionalism

The Department of Communications' public relations concentration is designed to prepare students to work in the public relations environment, and professional decorum is expected at all times. This means the instructor and students adhere to workplace norms for collegial and respectful interaction. Students are expected to arrive on time and not leave early unless prior permission is given. Talking while the instructor or another student is talking is prohibited and can result in being asked to leave the classroom immediately and a lowering of your grade. Cell phones and beepers should be turned off during class. ******If a cell phone rings/vibrates or is used for text messaging during class, there will be a pop quiz on the spot.******

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism occurs when a student uses or purchases ghost-written papers. It also occurs when a student utilizes the ideas of or information obtained from another person without giving credit to that person. If plagiarism or another act of academic dishonesty occurs, it will be dealt with in accordance with the academic misconduct policy as stated in NCSU's Code of Student Conduct.

Furthermore, the Honor Pledge, "I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this test or assignment," will be assumed by a student's typed or written signature on any test or assignment.

Students with Special Needs

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653.

Diversity

Effective public relations relies on the ability to recognize and embrace diversity in all its forms, including viewpoints. Throughout the class, you will have opportunities to see how different cultural perspectives influence public relations. You are encouraged take advantage of these opportunities in your own work and also to learn from the information and ideas shared by other students.

Attendance

Classes will consist of lectures, discussion, in-class exercises, and outside assignments. As such, prompt attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. Each student is allowed two absences for the semester. More than two absences will result in a two point deduction from your final grade for each absence beyond two. Students are responsible for all classwork missed. They should consult with classmates to obtain notes on lectures and assignments.

Deadlines

The practice of public relations hinges on meeting deadlines. Missing deadlines not only can damage a PR person's credibility, it can lead to dismissal. Thus, deadlines are treated seriously in this class. All outside assignments are due by the start of the class period on the date of the deadline. In-class assignments must be turned in by the end of the class period. Any other late assignment – including the communication plan and presentation — will not be accepted; they will be given a grade of zero.

Grading

Final grades will be based on the following 100-point scale:

A+ = 97-100 A = 93-96 A- = 90-92 B+ = 87-89 B = 83-86 B - = 80-82

C+ = 77-79 C = 73-76 C- = 70-72 D+ = 67-69 D = 63-66 D- = 60-62 F = < 60

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Your knowledge and ability to apply the course material will be assessed in the following ways. More detailed instructions for the assignments and communication plan will be provided to you in class.

(1) Attendance and Pop quizzes (20%). There will be 4-6 unannounced quizzes that will cover the information in the textbook; so, make sure you read the chapters! The quizzes will be a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. Reading this information will give you the tools to succeed with the other assessments. We will not have time in class to go over all of the information in the text, so you should read it ahead of time so that our classes can focus on application and discussion of the material. *No makeup quizzes will be given; however, you will be able to drop your lowest quiz grade.*

(2) In-Class Assignments (50%). There will be 10 in-class/homework assignments that will help you prepare for your final communication plan. Details of these assignments will be given on the day they are assigned. If you miss an in-class assignment, you are not allowed to make it up. As stated in the section on format, all written work submitted for this course must be coherent, logical, and carefully edited. Misspellings, syntax and grammar errors, and other writing problems are unacceptable in upper-division college writing, especially in work by public relations students. Points will be deducted for these errors!

(3) Communication plan and presentation (30%). You will select a product, service or organization, to be approved by the instructor to serve as your final project client. Nonprofit and community organizations are encouraged; sororities/fraternities, political, religious, and any controversial (e.g. Pro-Life, Pro-Choice) organizations are unacceptable. In the communication plan, you will conduct an audit that describes your client and including all pertinent background, intended audiences, and identifying the specific problems/opportunities you are addressing. You will set appropriate objectives, and outline all steps that would be necessary to finalize the detailed public relations program to achieve your objectives. Then, you will produce a full written plan that details the strategies to meet the objectives and how you would evaluate the plan. In support of your objectives and strategies, you will then prepare each of the following, in styles and formats most effective for your particular client:

- Business Letter
- Biosketches
- Fact sheet
- Backgrounder
- News release and media list
- Scripts for :10, :20, and :30-second radio and television PSA
- Feature Story
- 5-10 minute (750-1,500 word) speech appropriate for a client spokesperson to deliver with a description of the intended occasion and target audience
- Web site plan
- Public relations advertisement
- Special event design with an action plan (timeline, budget)
- Newsletter or annual report*
- Brochure*
- Themed media kit with all materials*

The communication plan will be due Monday, April 28 between 12pm and 3pm in Winston 230.

Format

Unless otherwise specified, all writing assignments must be typed with a 12-point serif font (e.g., Times, Palatino, and Times Roman), double-spaced and framed by one-inch margins. AP style guidelines must be followed. Because this is a writing class, no additional consideration will be given to written work accompanied by artwork or any other kind of design element. However, a well-designed portfolio will be an advantage as a tool to assist in a job search. You will be evaluated on:

- The ideas you conceive *and* the extent to which you develop those ideas.
- The technical quality of your written presentation: neat, typed, error-free copy that conforms to the AP stylebook, and copy that is well-written, easy to follow and easy to understand.
- As with all written work, pay special attention to spelling, grammar, punctuation, and style.

The grade for each assignment will depend on both of these components. So a great conceptual piece with poorly edited writing will only get a maximum of a B, as will a technically excellent piece that is not well conceptualized.

Department Equity Statement

All persons, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, physical disability or sexual orientation shall have equal opportunity without harassment in Department of Communication courses and programs. Any harassment should be reported immediately to either the classroom instructor or the department head.

COM 316 Course Schedule

(Subject to Change at Instructor's Discretion)

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings
Week 1	Jan 09	09: Introduction to the course	09: None
Week 2	Jan 14 Jan 16	14: Interviews 16: Journalistic Writing and AP Style	14: None 16: AP Stylebook
Week 3	Jan 21 Jan 23	21: NO CLASS—MLK, Jr. Holiday 23: Journalistic Writing	21: None 23: Chapter 1
Week 4	Jan 28 Jan 30	28: Behavioral Framework 30: Resumes and Cover Letters	28: Handout 30: Chapter 2
Week 5	Feb 04 Feb 06	04: Public Relations Research 06: Situation Analysis	04: Chapter 19 06: Chapter 4
Week 6	Feb 11 Feb 13	11: Developing the Plan 13: Business Writing	11: Chapter 18 13: Chapter 14
Week 7	Feb 18 Feb 20	18: Backgrounders, Position Papers 20: News for Print Media	18: Chapter 5 20: Chapters 7, 11
Week 8	Feb 25 Feb 27	25: News for Broadcasting 27: Lab	25: Chapter 9 27: None
Week 9	Mar 03 Mar 05	03: SPRING BREAK 05: SPRING BREAK	03: None 05: None
Week 10	Mar 10 Mar 12	10: Feature Stories 12: Web sites	10: Chapter 6 12: Chapter 13
Week 11	Mar 17 Mar 19	17: Blogs 19: Media Kits	17: Chapter 16 19: Chapter 8
Week 12	Mar 24 Mar 26	24: Media Training 26: Speeches	24: Chapter 12 26: Chapter 12
Week 13	Mar 31 Apr 02	31: Brochures 02: Newsletters	31: Chapter 15 02: None
Week 14	Apr 07 Apr 09	07: Public Relations Advertising 09: Event Planning	07: Handout 09: None
Week 15	Apr 14 Apr 16	14: Lab 16: Final Presentations (6)	14: None 16: None
Week 16	Apr 21 Apr 23	21: Final Presentations (7) 23: Final Presentations (7)	21: None 23: None
Week 17	Apr 28	28: Communication Plan due in Winston 230 between 12pm – 3pm	