**COMM 334 Writing for Public Relations**

Syllabus, Spring 2020 (revised 1/21/20)

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Office hours: Tu-Th 10-11 or by appointment

**Course Description**

Whether you are interested in working for a non-profit, corporation or political campaign, effective

written communication is paramount for success. In this online class we will take a hands-on

approach to public relations writing. Your work will center on a hypothetical (or even actual) organization of your choosing. You’ll create a portfolio of work for this organization, using strategies and tactics presented largely in our readings; you will also use your own research and limited supplementary materials (such as occasional Powerpoints from me). *The course is not heavily lecture-based and will require more independent effort on your own time*. Your primary purpose is to sharpen your strategic communication writing and editing skills. Your work will be in the form of print and online news releases, a full-sentence speech outline, a blog post or online feature, and other communications. Your work also will incorporate online discussion, peer editing and peer evaluation.

**Course Objectives**

1. Compose effective public relations messages using proper grammar and AP style. *Note: it is assumed that you have a basic command of both these skills and that you already possess a copy of the AP Stylebook.*
2. Analyze target audiences as well as opportunities and constraints that help or hinder communication with those audiences.
3. Create a portfolio of basic strategic communication materials to appeal to target audiences.
4. Demonstrate understanding of the ethical principles surrounding the field of public relations.

**Division of Communication Learning Objectives for Communication Majors**

This course will help you achieve the Division’s objectives for all curricula -- especially Nos.1 and 2

1. Communicate effectively using appropriate technologies for diverse audiences.
2. Plan, evaluate and conduct basic communication research.
3. Use communication theories to understand and solve communication problems.
4. Apply historical communication perspectives to contemporary issues and practices.
5. Apply principles of ethical decision making in communication contexts.

We'll measure these outcomes through regular quizzes, a final exam, and skills and knowledge you demonstrate on writing assignments and critiques of those (including the work of others and yourself). Timely completion of writing tasks and dedicated participation in the peer review process is especially critical. Due dates for all assignments are listed in each Canvas assignment and a complete summary of the course calendar (subject to minor changes) is also on the course home page.

**Required Texts and readings**

Thomas H. Bivins, *Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format*, Eighth Edition (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2014). Available as rental from UWSP bookstore.

*Associated Press Stylebook*. If you don’t already have one of these – and all of you should -- order one online (Amazon is cheap), purchase a copy at the UWSP bookstore (although the bookstore generally is understocked), or visit apstylebook.com and get an online subscription. The newer the better, as they’re updated constantly. If you don’t already have one, you must immediately obtain one, as there will be no exceptions made to quiz deadlines.

Other readings may be assigned throughout the semester and will be posted as links, PDFs or other easily accessed documents.

**Writing and other assignments -- Points**

1. Randomly generated AP style quizzes (8 x 15 points) – 120 points
2. Quizzes over text (11) – approximately 180 points
3. Writing assignments (6 x 50) – 300
4. Direction sheets for writing assignments (6 x 10) – 60
5. Online feedback for peers (6 x 10) – 60
6. End-of-term portfolio of writing – 100
7. End-of-term feedback survey over portfolios – 120
8. Cumulative, open-book quiz (final exam) over Bivins text – 150

**MINIMUM POINTS AVAILABLE 1,090**

Because this is an hybrid class within a shortened time frame, it is particularly important that you observe deadlines and understand how Canvas works. Please read and follow the late policy, which has very little room for flexibility. Even if you are sick, you will be expected to check in daily and meet your assignment requirements.

**Grading Policy**

Your grade will be based on the number of points that you earn as opposed to a percentage of points. (Note: this means you only need about 85 percent of the available points to earn an A.) Point totals required are:

A: 930 or more A-: 900-929 B+: 870-899 B: 830-869 B-: 800-829

C+: 770-799 C: 730-769 C-: 700-729 D+: 670-699 D: 600-669

F: Fewer than 600 points

**Deadlines are critical** to all professionals. **No quizzes may be turned in late and no writing assignments, direction sheets or peer evaluations may be turned in late without penalty.** Any written work will be docked 25 percentof the assignment’s potential value *for each 24-hour period that work is late*. The clock starts ticking at the time that it’s due. All work is turned in electronically. For example, if a 50-point draft is due on Tuesday at 11 p.m., it loses 12.5 points at 11:01 p.m. Tuesday and another 12.5 points at 11:01 p.m. Wednesday. The compressed schedule of an eight-week class requires that students commit to meeting our timelines. See a detailed late policy in the course documents area.

Generally, work will be posted electronically in the Canvas document area or discussion forums as MS Word files – Canvas will be set up to accept no other types unless otherwise noted.

All quizzes, including the final exam, are open-book. They are timed and it is expected that you will have read the assigned chapters before you take each quiz. There will be plenty of time for each quiz as long as you have read the material in advance. The final will be made up of randomly generated question sets from these quizzes, so it is particularly important that you do the readings and quizzes on time so that you don’t need to review as much before the final exam.

**Citations:**

Please keep track of all sources you may use, but you may use the informal attribution style of journalism to refer to your sourced material unless otherwise noted. I reserve the right to ask for a more formal listing, such as a thorough bibliography of any of your work, if necessary. Guidance on various styles is available from the Purdue Online Writing Laboratory.

**PLEASE NOTE: ANY ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT, INCLUDING MISREPRESENTING ANY WORK IN ANY WAY, WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF “F” FOR THE COURSE.**

**Statements of University Policy. You are responsible for understanding university policies, especially regarding academic misconduct. That policy can be found at http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rights/rightsChap14.pdf.**

*Students with Disabilities*: Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible.

**Statements of University Policy**

**UWSP 14.01 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES.**

The board of regents, administrators, faculty, academic staff and students of the University of Wisconsin system believe that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the University of Wisconsin system. The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions.

**UWSP 14.03 ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINARY ACTION.**

(1) Academic misconduct is an act in which a student:

(a) Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;

(b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;

(c) Forges or falsifies academic documents or records;

(d) Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;

(e) Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; or

(f) Assists other students in any of these acts.

(g) Violates electronic communication policies or standards as agreed upon when logging on initially (See uwsp.edu/it/policy).