



University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

College of Fine Arts and Communication
Division of Communication

Stevens Point WI 54481-3897
715-346-3409; Fax 715-346-4769
www.uwsp.edu/comm/

Communication 334: Writing for Public Relations
Section 3: T/Th 8 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Thomas Salek, PhD	: Instructor
CAC 305	: Office
tsalek@uwsp.edu	: Email
715-346-3401	: Phone
M: 11 – 1 p.m.	: Office Hours
Or by appointment	

Required Texts:

- Thomas H. Bivins, *Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format*, Eighth Edition (Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2014). Available: UWSP Text Rental.
- Additional readings posted to our class D2L site.

Recommended Texts:

- *Associated Press Style Book and Briefing on Media Law*. Any edition after 2011. Available for purchase at the University Store.
- Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald, *When Words Collide: A Media Writer’s Guide to Grammar and Style* Any edition. (Boston, MA: Thomas Wadsworth). Available in the library or on Amazon.
 - We will not reference this textbook directly, but it is a great writing guide to consult on all matters of grammar and clear, concise writing.

Social Media

The course is supplemented with material and discussions that will be available on social media.

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/7063756>



Course Description

Whether you are interested in working for a non-profit, corporation or political campaign, effective written communication is paramount for success. Throughout the semester we will take a hands on approach to public relations writing, as well as internal communication best practices. We will research a variety of strategic communication case studies where written communication was used effectively and ineffectively. Alongside analyzing real-life and fictional case studies, this course will help you build your own strategic communication writing and editing skills. As part of the course, you will be asked to write news releases, news advisories, fact sheets, key messages, blog and Twitter posts, newsletters, press kits, and speeches. To reach these goals, we will rely on our textbook, as well as additional readings posting to LinkedIn. Each class session is designed to incorporate discussion, as well as individual and group assignments.

Course Objectives

1. Compose effective Public Relations messages through AP Style, flawless grammar, and clear writing.
2. Analyze one's target audience, as well as the immediate opportunities and constraints that help/hinder communication with that audience.
3. Create a digital newsroom of basic Strategic Communication Materials to appeal to a target audience.
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 majors, especially numbers 1, 2 and 3

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

Course Requirements

Assignments	Points
Course Policies Agreement	10
In-Class Activities and Professionalism	140
LinkedIn Posts (10 @ 15 points each)	150
Quizzes (4 @ 50 points each)	200
Individual Homework Assignments (4 @ varying amounts)	400
Final Group Project: Digital Newsroom (Content/Strategy)	100
TOTAL	1,000

Extra Credit: Extra credit may be announced in class only. These opportunities are optional. Specific directions will be provided when the opportunity arises.

Course Policies Agreement

At the start of the semester students will electronically sign a course policies agreement and upload it to the D2L dropbox. The course policy agreement lists documents that must be reviewed before the course begins. To receive credit, students must read the appropriate documents, indicate that the materials have been read, and then upload the agreement to the D2L dropbox.

In-Class Activities and Professionalism

Class discussions and activities are vital to your understanding of key course concepts. Just like in the public relations world, many of the activities and presentations in this course are collaborative. That being said, it is vital for you to come to class, and constructively collaborate with your colleagues. This will help you better understand the course concepts, and prepare you for collaborating on graded group projects. As such, attendance is strongly encouraged.

Anyone who misses a class should make arrangements with another student to copy notes, review

announcements, and so forth. The instructor will present course materials only during designated class periods and will not reiterate materials from an entire class session during office hours. If students have specific questions that seek clarification about course content from a previous class period, they should not hesitate to ask, and the instructor will gladly work to clarify the course materials. However, students should not arrive at an instructor's office hours with the assumption that the instructor will "go over whatever I missed." Continually arriving late and/or leaving early is strongly discouraged. If it becomes a distraction, the instructor will reach out directly to the student via email or face-to-face. In-Class Activity and Professionalism will be evaluated throughout the semester and posted before the final presentation date.

Throughout the semester **140 points** will be allocated toward your In-Class Activity and Professionalism grade. **One-hundred and twenty (120) points** will be allocated for completing In-Class activities (i.e., answering the question prompt for the day, bringing in an article, completing a group assignment, etc.). *Throughout the semester up to 120 points can be earned for in-class activities. Each class session (except for days with quizzes) offers up to 6 points allocated toward the 120 for in-class participation points.*

The remaining **20 points** is earned through classroom professionalism. **Please note that simply attending class does not constitute as full participation.** Students are expected to be active in class (i.e., engaged in discussion/activities and making substantive connections to the course material/textbook). Below are four Participation and Professionalism principles. Students who follow all four of these principles will receive full points for professionalism.

- **Participation:** Participation includes making helpful comments, grounded in key course concepts. These comments should help others in the class better understand the material. Remember that active listening is another key communication component.
- **Preparation:** Everyone is expected to have their book and read the assigned chapter(s) before attending class.
- **Punctuality/Politeness:** There are unavoidable circumstances to be late, but make every effort to always arrive on time. If, for some reason, you run late on presentation days, **do not walk into the classroom or knock on the door while one of your classmates is presenting.** Please wait until the presentation has finished to enter. There is also a strict technology policy for this course. Students will get two free passes for breaking the technology policy (i.e. forgetting to silence a phone, texting during class, etc.). After that 3 points will be deducted for every disruption.
- **Professionalism:** The classroom is an inclusive and professional environment. Everyone is to be treated with respect. Do not engage in side conversations, or be disruptive, when someone is speaking in front of the room. All types of communication in this course should be formal and professional. For example, when emailing the instructor or your colleagues, remember to include a proper subject line, greeting, and proper grammar.

LinkedIn Posts

In today's business world, social media plays a vital networking role, but also a forum for discussion. Throughout the semester you will be asked to create a LinkedIn profile and participate in our class discussion board about topics related to Public Relations, Writing, and Corporate Communication.

- *Create a Social Media Profile*
 - In order to participate in this part of the assignment, you must create or update a LinkedIn profile that contains relevant information about education, experience, and key skills.
- *Join the Class LinkedIn Group*
 - During the first week of class, you must join the LinkedIn group that was set up for the course. After you have created your LinkedIn profile, join the group by following this link and then clicking the yellow “Join” button: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/7063756>
 - *Be aware that after you join, there may be a delay before your request is approved. Please join the group before the deadline. If your request to join the group is not approved prior to the deadline for the first post, you will lose the points.*
- *Participate in Discussions*
 - Throughout the semester you are required to post to the discussion board at least seven times (i.e., every other week). To accomplish the goal of seven posts you can participate in the discussion board in two ways.
 1. Respond to an article that I or another colleague has posted to the LinkedIn Discussion board.
 2. Post a new article and short reflection on the value of this article for the course and/or PR industry.
- *Evaluation Criteria*
 - Posts will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
 1. Proper AP style, spelling and grammar.
 2. The post is at least a full paragraph long (i.e., 4 sentences).
 3. The post does not just summarize the article, but ties the article (or other response in the thread) to a relevant conversation about key course concepts. This includes providing a citation to the textbook or relevant course readings.
- ****After you have posted the comment to LinkedIn, you will need to take a screenshot of the comment and then add a screenshot to the Word document containing your original comment. A screenshot is a picture of the comment as it appears on the forum. For instructions about taking a screenshot with your operating system, see: <http://www.take-a-screenshot.org/>. Once you have taken the screenshot, position it within the Word document where you wrote the comment. Then, save the file.**
 - All text posted to the LinkedIn discussions as well as the screenshot should be saved in a Word document and uploaded to your discussion section’s dropbox. You will only receive credit for this assignment if you post the comment to the thread in LinkedIn AND ALSO upload the Word document (with text of your comment and the screenshot) to the appropriate D2L dropbox by the designated deadline.**

Reading/Lecture/AP Style Quizzes

There will be four quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes are to test key ideas from the readings, lectures, class discussions and your grasp on grammar and AP style. Each quiz will be a different format (i.e., multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer, etc.). Quiz dates are scheduled for the following dates:

- Quiz 1: Feb. 2
- Quiz 2: March 2
- Quiz 3: April 4
- Quiz 4: May 11

Homework #1: Target Audience Analysis and Key Message Writing (75 points)

For this homework, you will analyze how a text motivates an audience to action through symbol use. This paper involves writing an analysis (three pages minimum) and five key messages (one page minimum) for an issue that you care about. This can be a contemporary, historical or fictional case study. The key to the assignment is that you analyze where strategic messaging helped a person or organization appeal to the target/rhetorical audience.

To start this homework, consider the following steps.

1. Find an issue or campaign that you care (and want to learn more) about
2. Find any Press Releases, a Digital Newsroom, or Controlled pieces of information from this cause/campaign
3. Analyze the strategic communication purpose (i.e., why is the rhetor speaking/writing), audience (i.e., who needs to know information), and constraints (i.e., the positive or negative things that stand in the way of advancing strategic messages)
4. Once you identify the situation, target audience and constraints, think about what kinds of messages would appeal to those who could be persuaded or motivated to action through symbol use.
5. After writing your analysis of the situation, audience, and constraints, write five original key messages that address the situation, are directed at the target audience, and use/avoid the constraints.
 - a. Provide a brief explanation for why each of your key messages would be persuasive to the target audience.

Homework #2: Interview Recap Using a Digital Medium (75 points)

For this homework, you will be required to interview at least one person and write a blog post. For this homework, you will be required to interview at least one person and create a digital media post based on this interview. This digital media post can be a written blog post that centers on the interview subject (such as a profile). The digital media post could be a written article about something that the interview subject spoke about. Regardless of what angle your digital media post takes, you should write a 500 – 800 word document, 2-3 minute video or audiocast, or any other approved medium. To start this assignment, consider the following steps:

1. Find an interview subject and set up an in person or phone interview. This interview subject can be related to Public Relations or a topic of your choice.
2. Based on your interview, find an angle or story that you can center the post around (a tip to consider might be suggested tips or hints that folks could take on a subject).
3. Select your medium of choice (e.g., a blog, podcast, video, series of Twitter posts, an infographic, etc.)
4. Create the content for your interview recap. If it is a blog, write it on your computer. If it is a podcast, record it or write the script. If it is a video, record it or write the script.
5. Be ready to share a draft in our class workshop where you will get copy and content edits.

Homework #3: News Release and Backgrounder (100 points)

For this homework, you will be asked to write a backgrounder and press release about an organization or campaign. This news release and backgrounder will be created from primary and secondary research. The news release and backgrounder should be based on a topic that interests you (e.g., animal adoptions in Portage County, ground water safety in Wisconsin, concussions in high school football, etc.). To start this assignment, consider the following steps.

1. Begin thinking about your topic early. This homework can be on any topic, but you are required to do primary and secondary research. That being said, you may want to start by thinking about

what you can research quickly. The focus of the assignment is taking information and evidence and putting it into a backgrounder and news release.

- a. You may also want to look toward the final group assignment—creating a digital newsroom.
2. Begin to research your topic using secondary (i.e., books, websites, etc.) and primary research (i.e., interviews)
3. Write a draft of your news release and backgrounder and be ready to make edits in our class workshop.

Homework #4: Creating Long-Form Argumentative Strategic Communication Content (150 points)

This assignment helps hone your PR writing skills in a long-form or feature form. The goal of the assignment is to create an argumentative feature story (1,500 – 2,000 words) or public service announcement (3 to 5 minutes). In this assignment, you should identify your audience and purpose at the beginning of the text. The remainder of the assignment should inform your audience by presenting specific pieces of evidence and reasoning. To start this assignment, consider the following steps:

1. Begin to think about a topic and audience you would like to write about. You can write about the UWSP community, Division of Communication, or a company/campaign of your choice. You can even build off Homework #2 or #3 if you'd like.
2. Select your medium of choice (e.g., features essay, audio or video Public Service Announcement, cartoon, etc.)
3. Research your topic using primary and secondary research.
4. Create the argumentative content.
5. Have a draft of your argumentative story and be ready to make edits in our class workshop.

Group Digital Newsroom Project

For this final project, you will work in groups of 4-5 to produce the strategy and content for an entire digital newsroom and communication strategy. The primary goal of this assignment is to develop your writing skills. It will be evaluated based on the writing, not the overall design and layout.

Although individual group members may take responsibility for certain parts of the digital newsroom content creation, the entire group should develop the strategy. The idea behind this group project is to begin working as a team at the beginning of the semester and develop the project over the course of several weeks. Throughout the semester you will work closely with your teammates on editing homework assignments and completing classroom activities.

Development of the Digital Newsroom will include several items, specifically:

1. A Communication Strategy Document listing all content, audience, delivery date, and owner
2. At least Three (3) Press Releases / Media Advisories
3. At least Three (3) Social/Digital Media Posts
4. A Set of Key Messages
5. A Frequently Asked Questions document
6. A Backgrounder Document
7. Contact information

GENERAL GRADING POLICIES

Submission of Assignments

All assignments should be submitted **on D2L** by the specified date. You do not need to print off hard copies (unless otherwise specified).

Grading Policy

All course work is due by the date and time listed in the schedule unless otherwise noted. Requests to extend a due date for an assignment will be handled on a case-by-case basis, and the instructor has final say about any such arrangement. Requests should be made before an assignment is due—except in extenuating circumstances with documentation. Late work automatically will be docked 10% for each 24 hours after an assignment is due. *Please note: Even if an assignment is turned in 1-minute past the deadline it will be considered late and subject to the 10% penalty.*

Discussion of grades on assignments must take place before two weeks have elapsed from the receipt of the grade. After this, students are free to contact the instructor for clarification about a grade, but all numeric scores for assignments are final and will not be modified, regardless of the result of the discussion. In other words, don't wait until the last week of the class to ask about a possible grading error on an assignment that was completed more than two weeks prior. Grade disputes must be submitted in a written format (printed document or via email). In the document, provide concrete and defensible reasons for disputing a grade. Following receipt of the document, the instructor will review it and either reply with an explanation and/or may request a meeting with the student.

Grading Criteria for All Written Assignments

Written assignments for this class should follow the assignment guidelines. In any written work, please remember to provide arguments with ample evidence. This course is graded with the idea that an "A" is reserved for outstanding work. This means that the assignment demonstrates strong critical-thinking skills, makes an argument, supports it with ample evidence and is virtually error free. In contrast, a "C" is reserved for average work. This means that the assignment follows the minimum requirements, but may be unclear or not contain enough support.

Here are a few guidelines to follow before submitting written documents:

- Assignments should follow ALL the guidelines posted to D2L.
- Ideas are clearly expressed and supported with ample evidence from the course readings and/or outside sources.
- Assignments contain proper grammar and spelling (i.e., the paper has been thoroughly proofread). One way to ensure a paper is error free and easy to read is to read the paper out loud prior to submitting.
- Any assignment should follow AP style guidelines.
- Specific grading rubrics for each assignment will be available prior to its submission.

Revision Policy

One of the key aspects to this course is to hone in your writing skills. As part of that focus, editing is always the most important part of the writing process. Those who earn less than an 80 percent on a written homework assignment will be permitted to revise the assignment in order to improve the grade, according to the following policy:

1. No revisions will be allowed for written assignments earning an 80 percent or higher.
2. A revision does NOT guarantee a higher grade. You must show significant improvement to earn a higher grade.
3. A revision can improve the grade by up to 5 percentage points.
4. No revisions will be permitted for group projects or the final project.
5. Revisions will be due one week after you receive feedback.

6. Late work cannot be revised.

Final Grade Scale

Grading Scale	Letter Grade
1000-925	A
924-895	A-
894-875	B+
874-825	B
824-795	B-
794-775	C+
774-725	C
724-695	C-
694-675	D+
674-625	D
624-595	D-
594-0	F

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

Read the following policies carefully. Enrollment in the class constitutes agreement with and understanding of these policies. Ignorance of these policies does not excuse their violation.

Technology in the Classroom

Laptops or tablets may be used to take notes and for collaborative in-class assignments. Cell phones should be silenced and not used in the classroom. If you are expecting a phone call or text message that is absolutely urgent, please let the instructor know ahead of time, and then quietly excuse yourself from the room to take care of the matter. Adherence of this technology policy is part of the Participation and Professionalism course grade.

Excuses for Missed Work

Your instructor, on a case-by-case basis, will evaluate excuses for missed work. Permission to make up missed work will be granted only in the most unusual of circumstances, and only for excused absences. Any work missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up. These requirements are necessarily strict and enforced in order to provide fairness to all class participants.

To be eligible for permission to make up an assignment due to a verified absence, you must provide:

- Written evidence of the absolute need for you to be absent (emails are not acceptable)
- This evidence must be from an appropriate, verifiable source

Evidence must be presented to your instructor no later than one week after the missed assignment. Except in the cases of extreme emergency, however, students who need to be absent should contact their Instructor at least one week *prior* to the date they will be absent. The primary requirement of the

evidence for the absence is that it must demonstrate that a circumstance beyond your control required you to miss class on that day. Not being able to find a parking space is not a circumstance beyond your control, nor is oversleeping. On the other hand, if you have a note from a doctor verifying that you had an illness that prevented you from attending class, that would count as a circumstance beyond your control, as would being called up for military service or jury duty, as long as you provide the appropriate documentation. When it comes to being present and prepared on the days a quiz or class assignment is being given, it is presumed that most things are under your control. You will only be permitted to make up a quiz or assignment due to extraordinary crises. Carelessness and unpreparedness, and all the things that result from them, will not be considered valid reasons for making up a speech or exam.

Technology Requirements

Written work must be posted to the D2L dropbox in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF formats only. No other formats will be accepted. If the instructor cannot open your document, it will not count as being turned in, and you must reformat and repost. Late penalties will apply. Be sure to keep copies of your work and the feedback for the entire duration of the class.

When necessary, the instructor will communicate with the class and/or individual students via the email address listed in your D2L account. It is your responsibility to check that email account regularly.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

From the UWSP 14.01 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES – 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. For more info: <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Academic-Misconduct.aspx>

Note: Submissions via D2L will be automatically screened for plagiarism.

Students with Special Needs/Disabilities

If you have a disability and require accommodation, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center (6th floor of the Learning Resource Center – that is, the Library) and contact me at the beginning of the course. More information is available here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, this course complies with UWSP's outline for various situations. A full list of these emergency plans is available here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures/default.aspx>

A Note on Achieving Academic Success in this Course

I cannot wait to work with each and every one of you throughout the semester. I want everyone in this course to achieve their academic goals. To reach this end, I am happy to be here for you as much as you'd like. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email or stop by my office at any time. Throughout the semester there will be at least one required one-on-one individual appointment to discuss class participation and course goals. However, if you'd like to discuss individual assignments or anything, do not hesitate to reach out.

Course Schedule

This schedule reflects major readings and writing assignments. Additional assignments may be required throughout the semester. I may make changes to this schedule as I see fit to meet the needs of the class and take advantage of opportunities on your behalf.

Class Date	Topic	Readings	Graded Assignments
Jan. 24	Introduction to the Course	Syllabus	
Jan. 26	News Vs. Public Relations	Bivins Chapter 1	Course Policies Agreement
Jan. 31	News Releases Vs. News	Bivins Chapter 7 (105-125) In-Class Activity on News Releases Vs. News	LinkedIn Post #1 (Creating a LinkedIn Account, Signing Up to the Class Page, and Connecting with people you know)
Feb. 2	Controlled Vs. Uncontrolled Information	Bring to class 1 piece of controlled information and 1 piece of uncontrolled information	Quiz #1
Feb. 7	Intro to the PR Writing / Developing Key Messages (What are the three main questions to think about with PR writing).	Heinrichs, "Thank You For Arguing," Chapter 12 Term Shifting vs. Redefining Activity	LinkedIn Post #2
Feb. 9	Persuasion and the PR Professional as a Rhetorician	Brummett, Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Tradition In-Class Activity on <i>The Simpsons</i> , "Two Cars in Every Garage and Three Eyes on Every Fish" (2.04)	
Feb. 14	Planning and Research	Bivins, Chapter 3 In-Class Activity on Research	LinkedIn Post #3
Feb. 16	Information, Evidence, Arguments and Definitions	Keith and Lundberg, Chapter 7 In-Class Activity on Creating Arguments	
Feb. 21	Persuasion and Message Mediums	Bivins, Chapter 4 In-Class Activity on Message Medium Selection	Homework #1 (Target Audience Analysis/Strategy)

Feb. 23	The Role of Argumentation and Refutation in PR Writing	Ziegmuller, Refutation In-Class Debate	
Feb. 28	Interviewing	Beebe and Mottet, Interviewing In-Class Activity on Interviewing Skills	LinkedIn Post #4
March 2	Media Relations	Bivins, Chapter 5	Quiz #2
March 7	Writing for Social Media and Storytelling	Bivins, Chapter 6 Snow, Why Storytelling Will Be the Biggest Business Skill Barack Obama, "Mother" ad Barack Obama, "Country I Love" ad Warby Parker History The Memory Palace, Secret Kitty, http://thememorypalace.us/2009/07/episode-16-secret-kitty/ Bring in a PR artifact that tells a story through primary research (i.e., interviews)	LinkedIn Post #5
March 9	Impromptu Strategic Communication Activity	In groups of 4 or 5, you will be asked to create a specific type of strategic communication on a randomly assigned topic	
March 14	Interview Blog Post Peer Review Day	Bring a draft of Homework #2 to Class	
March 16	Class Held Online		Homework #2 (Interview Blog Post) LinkedIn Post #6
March 21	Spring Break	N/A	
March 23	Spring Break	N/A	
March 28	PR Ethics	Bivins, Chapter 3 In-Class Ethics Exercise	LinkedIn Post #7
March 30	News Releases & Media	Chapter 7	

	Advisories	In-Class Activity on News Releases and Media Advisories (Bring in a News Release or Media Advisory)	
April 4	Quiz	Assign Groups for the Final Digital Newsroom	Quiz #3
April 6	Workshop Day	Workshop for Homework #3	
April 11	Newsletters	Bivins Chapter 8 (154-172) Bring a Hard Copy of a Newsletter to Class	Homework #3 (News Release and Backgrounder)
April 13	Magazines and Trade Journals	Bivins Chapter 8 (172-192) Odell, The Culture of Pop Gordon, The New American Sparkling In-Class Discussion/Analysis of Features Writing for PR	
April 18	Writing for TV/Broadcast	Bivins, Chapter 10 In-Class Activity on Writing for Broadcast	LinkedIn Post #9
April 20	Writing Speeches and Presentations	Bivins, Chapter 11 In-Class Discussion of Speech Writing	
April 25	Responding to Crises	Coombs, Chapter 7	LinkedIn Post #10
April 27	Crisis Communication In-Class Activity	In Class Activity on Creating a Creative Crisis Response	
May 2	Workshop Day	Homework 4 Workshop / Peer Review Day	
May 4	Presentation Day	2-3 minute informal presentations of Homework 4	Homework #4
May 9	Final Group Workshop Day		
May 11	Quiz		Quiz #4
May 18 2:45 – 4:45	Final Exam	No Class – Turn in Group Project Online	Group Digital Newsroom (Written Content)