

COMM 334 Writing for Public Relations

Syllabus, Fall 2019 (revised 9/3/19)

Instructor: Dr. Steve Hill (shill@uwsp.edu) CAC 303, (715) 346-3887

Office hours: MW 12:45-1:45 p.m. and 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. 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, speech plans, key messages, and other communications. To reach these goals, we will rely on our textbook and additional readings. Our work will incorporate discussion as well as individual assignments and group work – especially peer editing.

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.*
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 quizzes, a final exam, and the skills and knowledge you demonstrate on class writing assignments and critiques of those assignments (including the work of others and yourself). Timely completion of writing tasks and dedicated participation in the peer review process is especially critical.

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) or purchase one of the copies available at the bookstore. The newer the better, as they're updated constantly; we'll talk more about this in class.

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

My teaching philosophy is based on concepts of community, relevance and the importance of excellent language skills. A short explanation of this philosophy is posted on Canvas. I hope you'll read it and understand how supporting this philosophy will contribute to a positive learning experience for our class.

Writing and other assignments --	Points
1. Randomly generated AP style quizzes (12 x 10 points) –	120 points
2. Randomly generated grammatical quizzes (6 x 10 pts) –	60
3. Quizzes over text (11 x 15 pts) –	165
4. In-class exercises (8 x 40) –	320
5. End-of-semester portfolio of writing –	100
6. End-of-semester evaluation of colleague portfolios –	75
7. Colleague evaluation of your portfolio and class participation (1 x 40, 1 x 35) –	75
8. Cumulative quiz over text, grammar, and AP style (online; final exam period) –	15
TOTAL	1,065

Attendance is required, but no specific number of points is attached to attendance. Any absence, however, results in less opportunity to work on and master class principles and goals. In addition, absences likely will not impress your colleagues, who will evaluate your work throughout the semester and assign a general ranking to your work at the end of the semester that is worth up to 75 points. Finally, too many absences (more than a couple) may cause me to report the absences to the registrar, coaches, advisors or other interested or relevant parties, especially as is required by federal or institutional policies.

Grading Policy

Your grade will be based on the number of points that you earn. 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 work may be turned in late without penalty.** First and second drafts will be docked 25 percent of the assignment's potential value *for each 24-hour period that work is late.* **Late peer feedback, surveys or portfolios will be penalized 50 percent of their value per 24-hour period.** The clock starts ticking at the time that it's due. All work is turned in electronically. For example, if a 40-point draft is due on Tuesday at 11 p.m., it loses 10 points at 11:01 p.m. Tuesday and another 10 at 11:01 Wednesday.

Generally, work will be posted electronically in the Canvas document area or discussion forums as MS Word files – no Microsoft Works or other noncompatible formats. **Work not posted in a compatible**

format will be counted as late. Work that I cannot download or open for any reason, such as being named incorrectly – will also be counted as late.

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).