

**MC 4001: Public Relations Writing
at Louisiana State University – Baton Rouge
Section 3 with Dr. Boyer
Fall 2003**

Meeting Time: 1:30-3:30 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday
Meeting Place: 263 Coates Hall
Office: 248 Hodges Hall
Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 p.m. and 3:30-4:30 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday
Office Phone: 578-3488
E-mail: lboyer@lsu.edu

Prerequisite

MC 2010 (Media Writing), reasonable typing ability and strong foundation in the English language.

Texts and Materials

Wilcox, Dennis. *Public Relations: Writing and Media Techniques*, Fourth edition
The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law
A ream of 20 lb. white paper for use in laser printers

Suggested Reading/Viewing/Listening

Anything that keeps you abreast of current events.

Community Partner

Yolanda Perrilloux , Administrator
Myriam's House

Service Learning

MC 4001 Section 3 is a service-learning course, which is defined as:

...a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (from Bringle & Hatcher, 1995)

The service-learning component requires students to apply established principles of public relations writing in a nonprofit setting as part of the course project. Specifically, the service activity will involve working with Myriam's House to create a newsletter and develop content for a Web site.

The experience will expose students to real-world application of public relations. Further, the work will take place within a non-profit organization and will expose students to the realities of community service (limited resources, competing demands, etc.) and to community needs. It will also bring to light the professional and ethical issues inherent in public relations work. At the end of the semester, students will have a professional item (deliverable) that they can use to impress future employers.

Introduction to Public Relations Writing

This is a professional course in print copy writing and related to public relations activities. Therefore, the primary objective of this class is to make you more proficient in the various forms of public relations writing targeted to specific audiences. These forms of public relations writing include news releases, fact sheets, media lists, speeches, feature stories, letters, memoranda, company histories, advertising and advertorials, commentary (such as letters to the editor or opinion pieces), newsletters and brochures. PR writers may also be asked to produce issues management reports, annual reports, materials for Internet web pages, fliers and crisis management materials.

Our goal will be to produce as many of these types of written materials as possible. In the process of studying and practicing public relations writing, we will also discuss the role of public relations in organizations. This background knowledge is essential to the composition of successful messages. Public relations writers must understand their central role in establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between and organization or company and its many publics. This means having a grasp of public relations as an integrated marketing activity and a discipline that draws upon psychology and other fields for its theories and practices.

We will focus on learning by doing. Each week we will discuss and practice good grammar, learn style according to the Associated Press manual and seek to master techniques for crafting messages to the right audience and medium. A premium will be placed on critical thinking, information gathering and language ability because each is important to successful writing. Materials prepared for this class must be proofread for accuracy of information and proper grammar and must be properly organized and targeted to those who will read or hear the information.

Course Objectives

- To become familiar with the law and ethics of public relations writing in order to produce messages that meet the highest professional standards.
- To develop proficiency in news releases, brochures, feature stories and other written tools of public relations
- To develop critical thinking skills that make us better communicators
- To hone language and style skills that will allow us to produce written materials that are clear, accurate, creative and stylistically acceptable to the public relations profession.
- To satisfy a service-learning requirement that will help you learn about the community and create a professional portfolio.

Civic Learning Goals and Objectives Goals:

To foster an understanding of social issues in our community.

To foster an understanding of civic responsibility.

Objectives:

- Demonstrate an understanding of social issues through reflective essays, class discussion, presentation.
- Demonstrate an understanding of civic responsibility through reflective essays, class discussion, presentation.

Expectations and Policies

Attending class and meeting writing deadlines are absolutely essential to being successful in this class. Your grade could be adversely affected by missing quizzes or assignments because you were tardy or absent. Part of your grade will be based on several kinds of in-class activities, which include, but are not limited to AP style quizzes, writing assignments and copy editing exercises. *In-class activities cannot be repeated for unexcused absences.*

Our focus will be on preparing writing assignments and having classroom discussions about public relations writing and the profession of public relations. Lectures will be kept to a minimum. Our goal is to learn from practice and from each other. That is why a great deal of classroom time will be spent practicing skills necessary to doing outside writing assignments well and critiquing student work. *Also, you are expected to read and listen for topical issues that impact public relations so that we can make these issues part of our discussion.* When possible, guest speakers will be invited to provide additional insight into the professional world of public relations.

Quizzes will most often be given at the beginning of class. Those students who are more than 10 minutes late will not be allowed to take the quizzes. The policy on make up work and missed assignments is not flexible. All work is due at the beginning of class. Work handed in late will receive a 10-point penalty for each day it is late beyond the due date. There are no exceptions to this policy except a medical emergency. You must present documentation of the reason for your absence as soon as possible. *Routine medical appointments, job interviews and research for a class assignment are not valid reasons for missing class.*

If you are participating in an event that is sponsored by the university that will interfere with your attendance in this class, you must let me know of the reason for your absence *in writing* as far in advance as possible. If a scheduled outside writing project is due while you are away, you have the responsibility to turn it in *before* you miss class. Please attach a note to the assignment that explains your absence. When you return, you can then see me about making up the in-class assignments you missed, including quizzes. *It is always the instructor's choice whether to allow you to make up work missed because of an unanticipated absence. Some assignments may not be repeated beyond the initial class period.*

All written assignments must be typed or computer-generated, double-spaced and submitted on 8.5 X 11 inch paper (unless you are instructed otherwise). No handwritten materials will be accepted (unless we have computer problems in the classroom). You may use handwritten copy editing marks to make last-minute corrections to your work. Grammar and accuracy are always important in your work. Your grade *will* be reduced if you do not pay attention to such details.

Grading

Writing assignments will be the largest component of grading for this course. Outside assignments will be graded solely on the quality of what you submit to the professor. *Since MC 2010 is a prerequisite for this course, students are expected to bring good fundamental skills of writing for print and broadcast media.*

You should take comments on your papers as constructive criticism intended to help you avoid repeating serious errors. We are striving for steady improvement in the quality of the work submitted. You can lose points for repeating the same mistakes from paper to paper.

A student who receives an F because an assignment was not submitted will receive 0 points for no credit.

Each spelling, grammar, style or punctuation error will lower your grade by *five* points. Factual errors, including misspelled names and incorrect addresses, will lower your grade by *10* points.

Graduate students will be expected to do an extra outside writing assignment at the discretion of the instructor. Graduate students also will be held to a higher standard of performance than undergraduates on all writing assignments and exams.

You can earn a maximum of three extra credit bonus points to add to your final grade.

Grading Scale

A	90-100	D	60-69
B	80-89	F	59 and below
C	70-79		

I will not round grades. If your final grade is 89.7, you have earned a B in the class. Please take advantage of extra credit opportunities as they arise. There will not be many in this class.

Assignments

In-class assignments/quizzes/homework (10/11)	45%
Portfolio (1)	25%
Peer evaluation (2)	10%
Reflection exercises (3)	20%

All assignments will be posted on the Materials page of Semester Book.

Students with Disabilities

Students with a disability that may require some accommodation on the part of the professor must speak with me as early as possible in the course. They should also contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to obtain the necessary documentation of their disability to share with me.

Academic Honesty

Public relations writers are expected to uphold the highest ethical standards. These rules apply for this class. Be certain that you read and know the guidelines for academic integrity as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct. Copies of the code are available in the Office of the Dean of Students. The code explains that academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (copying work written or published by others) and looking at or copying another student's work as your own. Any instance of academic dishonesty may be reported to the Provost's office.

Diversity Statement

The Manship School of Mass Communication follows the policy of Louisiana State University as stated in Affirmative Action Plan, Vol. 1:

LSU firmly supports the national policy of Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity as outlined in the University's Affirmative Action Plan. The University policy of equal opportunity will be administered without regard to race, color, religion,

sex, age, national origin, physical or mental disability, marital status, veteran's status in the admissions to, participation in, and treatment or employment in the programs and activities which the University operates and sponsors.

The Manship School recognizes that our success hinges upon strong values that permeate the way we interact with society's future leaders. Honesty, integrity and respect for others are central to everything we do. We also recognize that as a community, our students, staff and faculty should reflect the society in which we live and work. This means a diverse Manship community is one of our most important resources. We are richer because of the different cultures, races, genders, sexual orientations and perspectives that find a home in the Manship School. We embrace and promote these unique backgrounds that are essential to our success as a leader in higher education.

Diversity means creating an environment of inclusion, in which all students, staff and faculty can grow to their fullest potential, thereby enhancing productivity and positively influencing all educational goals.

Tentative Class Schedule

Week of August 25

Introductions, course expectations, discussion of syllabus. In-class writing activities.

Week of September 1

Writing and editing fundamentals

Meet client for service-learning project

September 2 is final day to drop course without receiving a grade of "W"

Week of September 8

Chapter 2: Persuasive writing and Chapter 3. What makes news? How can public relations professionals create news?

Week of September 15

Chapter 6: Feature stories

Week of September 22

Feature stories

Week of September 29

Chapter 5: News releases.

Week of October 6

Chapter 7: Photos and Graphics.

Week of October 13
Chapter 8: Letters, e-mails and reports.

Week of October 20
Chapter 9: Radio, TV and Webcasting
Midsemester grades due October 21

Week of October 27
Chapter 11: Working with media.

Week of November 3
Chapter 12: Newsletters, E-zines and Brochures.
November 7 is final date to drop class

Week of November 10
Chapter 13: The World Wide Web

Week of November 17
World Wide Web

Week of November 24
Chapter 15: Letters, E-Mail and Reports.
Thanksgiving holidays are November 27-28

Week of December 1
Last week of classes
Portfolio due by 1:30 p.m. on December 4 in 248 Hodges Hall

*Please note that this is a living document.
Changes may be made at the discretion of the professor.*