

MC 4001: Public Relations Writing*

Louisiana State University

Section 1; T-TH (8:10 am-10:00 am); Room 100 Journalism

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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 am- 12:00 pm

Purpose

This course is an intensive laboratory workshop in public relations writing that encompasses a wide range of styles ranging from brief public service announcements to news releases to persuasive speeches and executive presentations. Writing is the foundation of professional public relations since most formal organizational communications begin or intersect with the written word. Thus, all future practitioners must be polished and capable writers, skilled in diverse forms and styles of writing and capable of working quickly. In addition, it is important to establish relationships and work within the community and for organizations that contribute to the community good. This course will be a combination of short lectures, in-class, and out-of-class writing assignments that will simulate the realities of the professional writing environment for future public relations professionals as well as understand how the local community affects the practice.

Required

Diggs-Brown, Barbara (2007) *The PR Style Guide* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education.

- A reliable thumb drive/flash memory stick for saving in-class work. It's also a good idea to have an additional one as a back-up.
- It is important that you understand AP style... The AP style guide (that you used in other classes) will be a valuable resource.

Moodle course administration: Study guides and grades will be posted on the site, as will the syllabus, and special announcements may be posted periodically. You can access the site via PAWS.

Service-Learning

MC4001 is a service-learning course. Service-learning is a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity which meets a community's need (from Bringle and Hatcher, 1995).

* *This syllabus is subject to change as the professor deems appropriate and necessary.*

As part of your Service-Learning commitment, you will be required to use reflection as a means of interpreting and gauging your success with your project. Reflection is the “intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives.” (Hatcher and Bringle, 1997) These reflections will be both written and orally communicated.

This Service-Learning component allows a student to not only become more acclimated to the community but to gain the skills necessary to work within it. In English, this means that you will be working with a real client on real work that will help both your client and your portfolio. It is essential that you understand that the establishment of 2-way symmetrical relationships is paramount in public relations and service-learning will help you understand this.

The course objectives include:

- 1) Conceptualize, plan, write and produce a variety of PR collateral materials
- 2) Write correctly and clearly in styles and formats appropriate to various audiences, mediums and settings
- 3) Understand and apply basic principles of graphic design to the production of PR collateral materials
- 4) Use traditional software such as MS Word, PowerPoint, InDesign and Dreamweaver to produce PR collateral materials, and use new media tools such as blogs and wikis to communicate with key publics
- 5) Critically evaluate your own work and that of others for clarity, accuracy, fairness, appropriate style and grammatical correctness
- 6) Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work with accuracy, fairness and respect for diversity

Some of the service-learning goals and objectives include:

- 1) Demonstrate an understanding of those issues (social, economic, political) that affect the community
- 2) Demonstrate an understanding of civic responsibility
- 3) Demonstrate your understanding of the above issues via reflective essays, class discussion and presentation

Course standards

Academic conduct

Original writing is essential to ethical public relations. The work you turn in must be your own work, and it must be original for this class. You must not use direct or paraphrased material from any other source, including Web sites, **without** attribution. You cannot turn in anything that you wrote for another class, at an internship, as a volunteer or in another academic or professional setting. I will handle any incident of academic dishonesty in accordance with Louisiana State University's policies on academic dishonesty. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment and may lead to expulsion of the class **and** major **AND**...yes...perhaps the university! So...um... don't cheat.

Finally, classes may **not** be recorded via audio tape or any other digital/photo/video technology. Cell phones and/or pagers must be turned off before entering the classroom because I will answer them causing untold embarrassment!

Diversity

Effective public relations relies on the ability to recognize and embrace diversity in all its forms, including viewpoints. I value and respect diversity in my classes and expect the same from you. Open minds folks!

Attendance and Deadlines

Students are expected to attend every class and to arrive on time. Assigned readings should be completed **prior** to class, and students should be prepared to discuss them. Classes will consist of lectures, discussion and in-class exercises, as well as outside assignments. As such, prompt attendance at all class meetings is mandatory. Please be aware that a student who attends class irregularly, comes to class late, fails to complete assignments on time or neglects assigned readings can normally expect to get a low grade, but of course you know that....right?!

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 assignments are due **by the start of the end of lab period** on the date of the deadline. There will be infrequent opportunities to redo an occasional assignment (**not** including the communication plan), but it must be turned in no later than one week from the original due date. Any other late assignment – including the communication plan and presentation -- will not be accepted; they will be given a grade of zero.

Grading

(1) Pop quizzes (10 pts). There will be 2 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.**

(2) Service-Learning Reflections (10 pts.) Because it is important to understand the ramifications of your service-learning commitment, you will be asked to write 2 reflections on the working with your client. These will be short papers (3 pages) that reflect the success and/or problems you've had working within the community. In addition to these written reflections, time will be taken throughout class to reflect verbally on the assignments and your relationship with the client and community.

The first reflection, collect at mid-term, will concentrate on your relationship with the client. What do you expect from the client? What are your plans? What are the strengths, opportunities, problems the organization has? Etc. The second reflection will answer the questions, How did we do?, How did the experience change your perception of the community? Did the project motivate you to work within your community more? Etc.

(2) Assignments (45 pts). Typically, there will be at least one writing assignment every week. You will be asked to complete many of your assignments in class; however, some will be outside-class assignments, especially later in the semester. The assignments will prepare you for the final communication plan project. 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 (35 pts). This is the service-learning aspect of the course. I introduce a client and working in groups you will develop a communication plan. You will begin work on this project early in the semester by meeting the client, although the bulk of the plan will be completed in the last few weeks of the semester. Occasionally, we will do a draft of parts of the plan as an in-class assignment to get you started. The components of this project are:

To demonstrate what you've learned in the course, the final project entails you and your group putting together a communication plan for your client. Each of the writing assignments that you work on in class will be tailored to suit the client. To assist you, you will turn in the writing assignments weekly which will be graded and returned for revision into your final project. Although you will complete nearly every type of writing assignment for your client, the final project may (or may not) contain all of them. You'll need to come to that strategic decision on your own.

At this stage, you should begin the background research for your project with the research synopsis. You'll need to cover the six components we'll cover in class, including the organization, target publics, organizational environment etc. You can format that document any way you like as long as all the components are covered.

Your first set of writing assignments will be due on **2/18**. The writing set should be word-processed, include a cover page and a table of contents. It should also include the following:

- Research Synopsis
- Situation Analysis
- Target Publics Selection
- Plan (goals, objectives, strategies, messages, & tactics).

Collectively, these are all the materials that will ultimately be placed in the "Background" section of your final plan.

The second set will be due on **4/20**. Please format it again following the guidelines above. It should include the following:

- Bio-Sketch
- Fact Sheet
- Letter (e.g., pitch, fundraising etc.)
- Backgrounder
- News Release
- Feature Story
- Brochure/Newsletter
- Radio and Television Ad
- Speech/Address

Some or (all) of these materials may ultimately be placed in "Tactics" section of your plan.

GROUP Presentations to the client must be made. These presentations will be 15 minutes long for the class. They will be made in front of the clients who will critique your project accordingly. They should include PowerPoint or some visual element. These will be performed **5/6**

Please note that your final communication plan should be turned in with two three-ring binders or bound folders on quality paper. All work must also be presented on a single CD. One of these will be given to the client while the other goes to me. The due date for your final plan is **5/6**.

Thus, your course grade will be based on three components worth a total of 100 points.

- Pop quizzes: 10 points
- 2 Service-Learning Reflections 10 points
- Writing assignments: 45 points
- Communication plan: 35 points

Your final course grade will be determined by the total number of points you accrue during the semester: 90-100 (A); 80-89 (B); 70-79 (C); 60-69 (D) 59 and below (F)

If you want to discuss your work, be sure to contact me to set up a time to meet.

Student services

Students with disabilities documented by the Department of Disabilities should notify me during the first week of class to discuss requests for special provisions.

Assignments

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| 1/15 | Introduction |
| 1/17 | The Hardest Subject to Promote: Yourself; Writing Lab |
| 1/22 | Resumes/Cover Letters Due Chapter 10: News Releases |
| 1/24 | Writing Lab |
| 1/29 | Chapter 11: Opinion Editorials |
| 1/31 | Writing Lab |
| 2/5 | <i>Mardi Gras (No class... WOO HOO!)</i> |
| 2/7 | Chapter 12: Public Service Announcements |
| 2/12 | Research Synopsis; Situation Analysis; Targeted publics |
| 2/14 | <i>Meeting with Client about Communication Plan project</i> |
| 2/19 | Chapter 7: Media Lists |
| 2/21 | Writing Lab |
| 2/26 | Chapter 9: Newsletters |
| 2/28 | Writing Lab |
| 3/4 | Chapter 3: Brochures/ <i>Research, Goals and Objectives</i> DUE for <i>Communication Plan</i> |
| 3/6 | Writing Lab |
| 3/11 | Letters and Emails |
| 3/13 | Writing Lab |
| 3/18 | Spring Break...no class...and you know you're glad! |

- 3/20 Spring Break pt. 2 the sequel
- 3/25 Chapter 15: Websites
3/27 Writing Lab
- 4/1 Chapter 13 Speeches
4/3 Writing Lab
- 4/8 Chapter 2: Audio News Releases
4/10 Writing Lab
- 4/15 Chapter 16: High Profile Projects
4/17 Writing Lab
- 4/22 Extra written materials for project; postcards, bio-sheet, etc.
4/24 Writing lab for final presentations
- 4/29 Writing lab for final presentations
- 5/1 *Final Presentations to the client!! (FINAL Communication Plans **DUE**)*

