**JOMC 232.2–Public Relations Writing – The Fall 2014 Edition**

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| **Instructor**: Marshéle Carter Waddell  **Phone**: 719.440.1000 (you may text or leave message)  **Email**: lmwaddel@live.unc.edu  **Classroom**: Carroll 141  **Time**: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:45-5:00 p.m.  **Office hours**: M/W 1:30-3:30 p.m. Carroll 261; T/Th by appointment | computer8 |

**Course Overview**

This course is an applied writing skills laboratory and a service-learning class. We will cover major communication tools of the public relations trade for multiple communication platforms, including news releases, features, speeches, pitch letters, fact sheets, public service announcements, blogs, social media and more. ***The skills of writing are learned by doing; you will have ample opportunities to learn by writing every day.***

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students should be able to

* **quickly** **produce** any of the professional written materials required in the public relations profession;
* **integrate strategy** into communication pieces to target appropriate/diverse audiences and media and to effectively advocate a cause;
* because this course simulates the working conditions of most public relations firms, you will learn to **professionally present** material, and
* finally, you will **develop a public relations portfolio, online and hard copy.**

**The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications** (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

* Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
* Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
* Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
* Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
* Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
* Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
* Think critically, creatively and independently;
* Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
* Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
* Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
* Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
* Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Units requesting evaluation of a graduate program must also demonstrate how their master’s graduates attain this additional core competency:

* Contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

**Prerequisites:** To take this course as an undergraduate, you must have successfully completed **JOMC 153: News writing** and **J137: Principles of Advertising and Public Relations**. No exceptions.

**Required Text:** Barbara Diggs-Brown’s ***The PR Style Guide: Formats for Public Relations Practice*** and***The Associated Press Stylebook***. I assign supplemental materials as well – see the syllabus and Sakai for details. All assigned readings should be completed before the appropriate class sessions for which they are assigned to generate discussion and ensure you’re prepared to write. If necessary, I will conduct pop quizzes on text material.

**Computer Supplies:** Bring your laptop to class. All work should be saved to a thumb drive, laptop or your email and not to the hard drive (it gets dumped regularly). Murphy’s law is alive and well in computer labs, and snafus do occur. Save early and often – I can’t resurrect lost documents!

**Reference Materials:** Use of reference materials – dictionary, thesaurus, those kind of fun things – to double-check accuracy is encouraged. These materials are available in the classroom and in the School’s library.

**News Content:** Keep up with current events! It’s important to know what’s going on in the world, and what issues your clients (today and in the future) face or will face. This makes you an effective practitioner!

**Assignments and Deadlines:** All writing assignments must be typed, double-spaced and turned in on time. For outside assignments, late papers (anything after 5:00 p.m.) will receive a reduced grade unless you and I agree before the assignment is due that it can be late. Otherwise the assignment will receive an F. No assignment will be accepted if it is turned in more than 24 hours after its deadline.

**Outside Assignments and APPLES clients:** As part of the APPLES Service-Learning Program, you will work with a client organization to produce communication pieces for them. Our service category this semester is Environmental Issues. This category will give you the opportunity to work with one of four nonprofit organizations. You will be expected to do periodic check-ins on the APPLES experiences and meet with the instructor to discuss progress.Failure to do the check-ins will affect your grade.At the end of the class, you will present your materials in an online portfolio.

The APPLES experience is valuable in that it provides professional pieces for your portfolio and gives you experience in client relations work in the professional realm.

**Sakai:** All PowerPoint slide presentations and other handouts are/will be posted on Sakai for your convenience. Please see the Resources link. Please consult these materials to ensure that you produce quality communication tools in this class. This syllabus is also filed under the Syllabus tab, and assignments will be posted in the Assignments folder.

**Exams:** You will have two exams – a midterm and a final. The midterm exam will be a 75-minute in-class writing exercise. The final (take-home) exam will be a longer writing exercise that covers the full session. Failure to show up for the midterm exam or to make prior arrangements to take it later will result in a grade of F. Failure to complete the final will result in an AB.

**Course Grade Calculation:** I will calculate your final grade as follows:

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| In-class assignments 30%  Client assignments 30%  Midterm exam 15%  Final exam 15%  Participation (class/client) 10% | Grading scale: A = 90-100  B = 80-89  C = 70-79 (+/-, too)  D = 60-69  F = below 60 |

***I follow the University’s Grading Standards:***

"A" students do not miss classes during the semester. They read and critically engage all the assigned textbook chapters and any optional readings on reserve before the material is covered in class. Written assignments and exams are not only complete but cover more than just the minimum requirements. The assignments exhibit proper style and format, are well organized, integrate strategic planning and targeting, and are written precisely and concisely. All materials are turned in on time or early, and all rewrite opportunities are used. These students keep up with current events.

"B" students miss one or two classes during the semester, but these are excused absences. They usually read the assigned textbook chapters and some of the optional readings on reserve in the library before the material is covered in class. Written assignments and exams usually exhibit proper style and formatting, integrate strategic planning and targeting, are well organized, and are written precisely and concisely. All materials are turned in on time, and all rewrite opportunities are used. These students tend to keep up with current events.

"C" students miss one or two classes during the semester, usually excused. They read the assigned textbook chapters and some of the optional readings on reserve in the library just before the material is covered on the exam. Written assignments and exams usually exhibit proper style and formatting, but they do not always integrate strategic planning and targeting and are not always well organized or written precisely and concisely. All materials are turned in on time, and most rewrite opportunities are used. These students sometimes keep up with current events.

"D" students miss three or more classes during the semester and skim assigned readings. Written assignments and exams usually exhibit proper style and formatting, but they often lack integrated strategic planning and targeting and are often not well organized or written precisely and concisely. Materials are not always turned in on time; only some rewrite opportunities are used. They don’t keep up with current events.

"F" students fail to come to class on a regular basis. They miss exams and written assignments and fail to use rewrite opportunities.

**Please note**: Students who earn less than a C-minus in the course will have to retake the class.

**Attendance:**  Regular, on-time class attendance your obligation, and you are responsible for all work, including tests and written work, for all class meetings. No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any given number of class meetings. **Note:** In practical terms, almost one-third of your grade is based on in-class assignments, making regular class attendance vital. An unexcused absence will result in a **0** for that day's assignment.

**Absences:** You may make up work you missed if an absence is pre-approved. It will be easier to obtain permission than forgiveness.

**Honor Code:** It is expected that each student in this class will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you haven’t read the code in a while, please revisit it! <http://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/Fall2012print.pdf>.

**Diversity:** The University’s policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination are outlined in the 2012-2013 Undergraduate Bulletin, <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/intro.html>. In summary, UNC does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression or disabilities.

**Harassment:** UNC does not tolerate harassment based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, disability, or for any other reason. It is also a violation of the Honor Code and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Title IX of the Educational Amendments. If you need assistance with a harassment issue or problem, bring it to my attention or The Office of the Dean of Students, [dos@unc.edu](mailto:dos@unc.edu) or 919.966.4042.

**Special Accommodations**: If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Learning Center website at <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/ldadhd-services/> or call 919-962-3782.

**Pep Talk:** This class will at intervals be time consuming and difficult. Your first few assignments possibly will receive low grades, which can be discouraging. Realize that if you put forth the effort, your work should improve throughout the semester, and this improvement will be reflected in your grades.

***Please, come talk to me at any time if you have questions or concerns about the course. My objective for the course is to make it a positive learning experience, admittedly through your hard work. I am a resource available for your help, not an obstacle in your path.***

**Guidelines for Grading of Assignments**

See the next sheet, which is a modified version of the JOMC 153, “News writing,” criteria, for how in-class and outside assignments will be graded. The following guidelines also apply.

**In-class assignments:**

* Ample time will be given in class to work on in-class assignments. You may not always complete the piece, however. Don’t worry. If you have a good first three paragraphs, you have what is necessary to write the piece. Speed comes with practice. I only grade what you turn in.
* Don’t wait until the last moment to print your copy. Give yourself time to proofread. ‘Tis better to have quality work that’s not yet complete than a completed assignment riddled with errors! I will alert you when there are about 10 minutes remaining in class. Save, save, save!
* For in-class assignments only, edit on your hard copy. Use the standard proofreading marks given in *The Associated Press Stylebook*. I must be able to read your changes!

**Out-of-class assignments (mostly for client):**

* Assignments are due at the **beginning** of class time. Late assignments (and, yes, that includes one minute late!) are docked 30 points. Assignments turned in more than 24 hours late automatically will be assigned a grade of 0.
* Assignments must be typewritten; assignments not typewritten will be docked 30 points. In the “real world,” computer glitches and printing problems happen but are not excused – the same is true in this classroom. Leave yourself plenty of time to cope with these problems and still make your deadline.
* Out-of-class assignments should be **picture perfect** when they are turned in. They may not be edited on hard copy. Obvious corrections, such as penned-in material, correction fluid, type-overs, etc., will be penalized 10 points each.

**Rewrites:**

* You may rewrite any assignment (in class or out of class) that receives a grade of 60 or lower. The rewrite is due no later than two days after you receive the assignment back, no later than the beginning of that class period. It is your responsibility to meet this deadline. The rewrite grade and the original grade will be averaged to determine your final grade for that assignment.
* You must FIRMLY attach the original work with your rewrite. If no original is attached, the rewrite will not be graded.
* Rewrites also will be subject to greater scrutiny. Mistakes I missed the first time around I may catch on the second read. Proofread your rewrites carefully!

**Grading Criteria for All Assignments**

There are two components to each of your grades: Strategy addresses appropriateness and accuracy of the content and approach; and technique addresses spelling, grammar, punctuation, AP style and other formatting issues. I average the two scores for each assignment.

**I. Writing**

+5 for an exceptionally effective lead and supporting material

+5 to +10 for exceptionally effective organization and treatment of material

+2 for effective transition or introduction of material

+2 to +10 for excellence in quality of information gathered and used

+2 to +10 for excellence in determining targeting strategy

-2 to -5 for ineffective or missing treatment of material, including, but not limited to, wordiness; use of jargon or clichés; inclusion of unnecessary or obvious information; redundancy; inappropriate choice or use of quoted material; incorrect word choice, including sexist language

-5 to -10 for an ineffective lead that needs work or for lack of supporting material for lead

-15 to -20 for missing the lead entirely or burying it

-10 for failure to include contact information on pieces

-10 for failure to include phone number, address, etc., of your organization or your client's organization

**II. Mechanics**

-5 for each error or inconsistency in style

-2 for excessively long or complicated sentences or paragraphs

-5 for each spelling error (yes, typos are spelling errors)

-5 for each punctuation error

-5 for each grammatical error

-10 for each minor factual error

-***50 for misspelling a proper name***; -10 for each subsequent misspelling of a proper name

**III. Research/Gathering Information**

+/-5 to 10 for resource selection: quality and number of sources used; appropriateness of individual sources, including the level of expertise or authority involved

+/-5 to 20 for thoroughness of material: existence of loose ends, holes, or unanswered questions; development of significant angles; inclusion of needed detail

+/-5 to 15 for backgrounding; research necessary to make the work complete or to provide needed explanations

+/-20 for handling of legal matters, such as libel, violation of legal right of privacy, and copyright violations

+/-15 for addressing material to appropriate publics

+/-15 for making the message or statement clear (i.e., a news peg; inclusion of key message)

**Note:** Many of these plus and minus points may be applied to the same story for recurring errors or for continual superior performance.

**Service Learning and Client Portfolio**

This semester’s service-learning experience will involve working with Piedmont Wildlife Center, South Durham Farmers Market, East Coast Greenway or the N.C. Community Garden. There are a number of relevant materials you might develop for your client – **particularly** if you take the initiative and use your growing knowledge of strategic communication to help your organization.

You may work individually or with other classmates on any aspects of client activities. It’s your call, but it is imperative that you begin now to determine how you want to contribute.

Remember: Through service learning, you will develop client contact skills, which are essential for professional development. Be sure to write up this experience on your resume and include any communication items you produced/helped create in your online portfolio. Much class time will be spent discussing these assignments, and more handouts will follow.

Step one – **Building an Online Portfolio**.

If you haven’t created a website/online portfolio, this is the semester to do it! There are a number of free web creation sites – Wordpress, Wix, Weebly, among others. Resources on Sakai may help you as you develop this portal.

Step two – At the end of the semester, **Your Online Portfolio** should include:

1. An updated **resume** (including your service-learning work for this semester)

2. A 1-2 page **reflection essay** – How did this experience contribute to your education and preparation for the real world? What was the most-valuable part of your service-learning experience? Most challenging? Least valuable? What recommendations would you make to the client regarding its PR efforts?

3. **Final time sheet** – You may create your own to track volunteer hours, or use the APPLES form: <http://ccps.unc.edu/files/2012/10/SLC-Course-Timelog-Form.pdf>

4. A **Communication Audit** (See Assignment link on Sakai for details) should provide an up-to-date overview of the Reese News Lab’s communications, including background, SWOT/situational analysis, and recommendations. Your report should be developed through discussions with the client, fellow students and the instructor, and through an assessment of its current communication materials/vehicles. The report will run about 5 pages. You may work independently or with a classmate.

5. **Profile** – Your profile may run 2-4 pages. Please also get a photo of your profilee!

6. **E-FAQ or Fact sheet –** What questions might a student, funder or user have about your client? What facts can be helpful?

7. **Optional piece** – you must also do at least one optional piece for your portfolio. There are a lot of potential options for you to choose from, and several ideas follow. If you come up with another idea, please let me know! This is not a complete list!

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| - 4 testimonials  - 1-2 minute informational video  - News release  - Broadcast release  - Letter to the editor  - Fact sheet or FAQ  - Linked In page/materials | - Direct mail letter  - Media list  - Media advisory  - PowerPoint with script  - Brochure  - Media relations guide  - Facebook posts (4) | - Website updates  - Flyer on event/activity  - Tweet series (at least 6)  - Persuasion platform  - 2 blog posts  - 2 PSAs  - Event materials  **Other ideas welcome!!** |

**Class Schedule**

(Note: This is a guide for the semester, subject to change. You will be notified of any modifications.)

## **Date Topic Readings and Assignments for the Day**

Aug. 20 Welcome! Introductory writing Course syllabus (Sakai – Syllabus link); re-introduce yourself to your *AP Stylebook*– you’ll love it!

Aug. 25 Research *Ten tips for creating effective online surveys; The age of*

*influencers; Introducing Share Tally; Punctuation R Us*; *Why grammar stinks*; (Sakai); AP Style-A Primer (textbook)

**\*\*\*Technique Exercise 1 due at the beginning of class\*\*\***

Aug. 27 APPLES Service Learning Overview and Intro to Clients

**Sept. 1 – No class! Happy Labor Day!**

Sept. 3 Communication Audits Ch. 4, Hallmark’s Communication Audit, OCPYC audit; (**Sakai**)

Sept. 8 Fact sheets/FAQs *Mastering AP Style*, *Facts R Us*; fact bio – Annie Godwin (**Sakai**);

*How to write a great FAQ page*

Sept. 10 News basics, advisories pp.207-208; *Writing and distributing a media advisory*;

Media advisory format; Advisory examples; *CRAAP Test* (**Sakai**)

**\*\*\*OPTIONAL - Technique Exercise #2 due at the beginning of class\*\*\***

Sept. 15 News releases Ch. 11; news release format; news release examples; *Press*

*release advice; 10 common mistakes in writing press releases*; (**Sakai**)

Sept. 17 Boilerplates and media lists Ch. 7; Boilerplates, p. 205; safe harbor statements,

Boilerplate examples; *How to manage edits from the legal and executive teams*

**\*\*\*Extra Credit – Fog Index Assignment\*\*\***

Sept. 22 Again with the news releases! *Is the press release dead?* ; *SEO and press releases; Generate*

*awareness* (**Sakai**)

**\*\*\*Post (on Sakai Forum) at least one thing that helps you understand news innovation issues\*\*\***

Sept. 24 Incorporating visuals Ch. 6; *Pinterest 101: A how-to guide*; *Digital PR tips for earned*

*media: Use multimedia to tell the story*; *3 creative ways brands are using Pinterest*; Photo cutline tips; Photo caption format; photo release form (**Sakai**)

Sept. 29 Media relations Ch. 8; *Eight ground rules when working with reporters*;

*Media relations – Satisfries; Media catching brief sheet;* browse the Help a Reporter Out site(**Sakai**)

###### *Date Topic Readings and Assignments for the Day*

Oct. 1 Blogs, tweets, etc. Ch. 9; *Top 5 blogging mistakes;* *Top 10 best practices for*

*blogging*; *5 creative ways to drive more traffic to your blog posts*; **Find a PR-related blog that you’d like to critique**

Oct. 6 Blogs, part two *14 social media predictions for 2014*; R*eturn of the Twinkie*,

*Blog post promotion tips* (optional)

**\*\*\*Post (on Forum) at least one thing that helps you understand news innovation issues\*\*\***

Oct. 8 Portfolios, writing job cover letters Items for Portfolios; *15 top tips for a successful PR career;*

*Resume Summaries;* *4 reasons why you need an online portfolio*; *Congratulations PR graduate!; Building personal brands; Job interview cheat sheet;* UNC Career Services Web page- letters (**Sakai)**

Oct. 13 Broadcast and streaming media Ch. 2; Writing for the Ear; *Broadcasting style tips* (**Sakai**)

Oct. 15 Midterm exam Open book, open notes

**Fall Break! Starts 5 p.m. Oct. 15 and runs through Sunday, Oct. 19. Enjoy!!**

Oct. 20 More broadcast Ch. 15; VNR examples

**Homework: Go online to prnewswire.com and select a video (or multimedia) news release to share**

Oct. 22 PSAs Ch. 13; PSA examples; *The striking nonprofit PSA Super Bowl ad*

*you didn’t see* (**Sakai**). Browse through Sound Cloud

Oct. 27 Letters to the editor Ch. 12; letter to the editor examples; *Diversity deficit in*

*broadcasting continues*; *Rivalry for a good cause* (**Sakai**)

Oct. 29 Direct mail letters Ch. 5; BP Letter (**Sakai**)

Nov. 3 Direct mail letters, part 2 Direct e-mail appeals; CWS e-letter; Direct mail – poor letter

SECU Family House letter(**Sakai**)

Nov. 5 Features Feature facts, *Receiving the gift of life*; *Lack of computer access*

*a major hurdle for the poor; Food stylists…, Startling slip-ups in safety* (**Sakai**)

Nov. 10 Feature pitch or catch Pitch tips; Feature pitch-GQ (**Sakai**)

Nov. 12 Persuasion platform *Program Writing* (**Sakai**); Highway Safety Research Center

platform (**Sakai**); Also – please listen to speech by Dr. Dan Ariely (page down a bit for video)

Nov. 17 Speeches Ch. 14; *Giving to Piedmont Gives Hope*

**\*\*\*Persuasion Platform due at the beginning of class\*\*\***

Nov. 19Speeches *Worst. Speech. Ever-Essential don’ts for speechwriters* (Sakai)

Nov. 24 **Portfolio day – no formal class session – work on your portfolios. ☺**

Nov. 26 **Thanksgiving Break- No Class-** **Portfolios Due by 5:00 p.m.**

Dec. 1 **Take-home exam**