

Public Relations 363: Media & Public Relations Writing

T&TH 11-12:15 WA 316

Fall 2015

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Office Hours: Daily from 1:00 - 2:00

Course Description:

In this class you will learn about the theory and practice of public relations, how public relations operates in organizations, its impact on publics and its functions in society. You will study the professional development of the field; concepts, issues, and principles in the practice; and models and theories guiding the practice. You will apply course materials to public relations program planning and management by working in a group on a strategic planning project.

For those planning public relations careers, this course provides a foundation for the public relations major. The course also meets the needs of those planning other professional and managerial careers that require an understanding of public relations concepts and management practices.

Required Text:

Wilcox, D. L., & Reber, B. H. (2013). *Public relations writing and media techniques*, Seventh ed. Pearson Higher Ed.

Course Objectives:

The actual practice of Public Relations involves the planning and implementing of a wide variety of communication activities. It also includes an assortment of duties related to the counseling of management. This course will introduce you to the basics of a range of PR activities. This course will build on your previous academic training, as well as your life experiences, and will require that you continue to hone, refine, and improve your critical and strategic sensibilities so as to become a successful and ethical PR practitioner.

Classroom Citizenship and Civility:

Each student is a citizen in this classroom and, as such, each student-citizen has a responsibility to the others in the classroom and each student-citizen has the right to have expectations of the others in the classroom. Everyone has the responsibility to be civil in the classroom and everyone has the right to expect that others behave with civility. To be 'civil' means that you consider those around you and work to maintain a positive learning environment. You will see that many of the class policies noted below help to create a civil classroom.

Class Policies:

- Late Assignments: An assignment will not be accepted late unless you provide documentation that proves that the tardiness is due to an emergency situation. Printer problems, computer

- problems, lost thumb drives are not emergency situations.
- Communication: Email is an official means of communication at Monmouth College. You are responsible for checking your MC email regularly. I may need to get information to you by way of email so it is important that you check your email on a daily basis. Email is also the best way to communicate with me!
 - Attendance: Your participation in this course is essential; as a result, so is attendance. Attendance is taken at the start of each class period. Late arrivals will be recorded (2 late arrivals = 1 absence). For each absence over the 2nd you will lose 50 points from your semester total. You are allowed to miss 2 class periods without penalty. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences—it is assumed that when you miss class, you have a good reason for doing so. Your three absences are to be used for the inevitable doctor’s visits, illnesses, sport events, court appointments, and funerals that may come up during the semester. An absence is an absence; use them with care. Extraordinary circumstances will be dealt with on a one-to-one basis as needed. Documentation may need to be provided in such cases.

Attendance means that you are physically and mentally present in class. You are not mentally present and cannot be engaged in the class if you are, for example, texting, preparing for another class, resting/sleeping, or checking your email. This inattentive behavior will be noted (2 such notes = 1 absence).

According to the 2014-15 college catalog, “When a student’s absences become excessive in the judgment of an instructor, the instructor may require that the student explain or receive permission for any further absences. This requirement is called “no-cut status.” The instructor notifies the student, the student’s advisor and the associate dean of academic affairs of the decision. Students who miss further classes without valid explanation or permission may be dismissed from the course with an F” (p. 10).

No matter the reason, when you are not present in class, you must contact a peer in the class to learn what was covered during the class and to learn what is due for the next class.

- Class Conduct: Every person in a class plays a role in shaping the classroom climate. I aim to help us collectively shape a classroom that has a healthy climate. The healthy classroom is one where people communicate with respect, share meaningful information, and collaborate with the understanding that everyone in the classroom is interdependent. A healthy classroom is one where intellectual curiosity, hard work, and academic excellence are valued. In order to create a positive classroom environment, please:
 - ✓ Do not use texting devices in class. Doing so will be noted.
 - ✓ Do not disrupt classroom activities by chatting when others are speaking, arriving late or leaving early
 - ✓ Do not sleep or rest with your head down in class. Doing so will be noted.
 - ✓ Participate meaningfully in classroom discussions and activities
 - ✓ Come to class prepared and ready to apply or discuss material you were assigned to read
 - ✓ Share your concerns about the course with me
 - ✓ Respect each other by honoring each person’s unique voices and, when you do disagree,

- communicate that disagreement in a mature and civil manner.
- ✓ Avoid racist, sexist, homophobic, or other exclusionary language that alienates members of our campus and classroom communities.

Academic Honesty:

In order for an academic community to thrive, members of that community must be able to trust the sincerity of its members. The very integrity of a college is grounded in academic honesty. One form of academic dishonesty that can undermine this integrity is *plagiarism*, intentionally or unintentionally copying the words or ideas from another source without giving that source credit.

Plagiarism is claiming as your own work done by another person. Turning in work written partially or wholly by someone else—whether a friend, roommate, web-site “expert” or the author of a book— is plagiarism. Instances of plagiarism include submitting a text:

- written by someone else as your own;
- written by means of inappropriate collaboration
- written by you for another course, submitted without the permission of both instructors;
- purchased, downloaded, or cut and pasted from the Internet;
- that fails to properly acknowledge its sources through standard citations.

Refer to the current *Scots Guide* for a detailed explanation of Monmouth College’s academic honesty philosophy and procedures for handling cases of academic dishonesty. Do not hesitate to consult with me if you have questions about academic honesty.

Assignments & Projects

Quizzes: You will have an online quiz over each chapter you are assigned to read. The quizzes are each due by class time of the day the chapter appears on your course schedule. The quizzes are 10 multiple choice questions and are designed to encourage you to interact with the textbook. **NO LATE QUIZZES WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

Writing Assignments: Your client for this semester will be Monmouth College, MC Department of Communication Studies, or a student organization you are involved with here at Monmouth College. Throughout the semester you will complete a series of written work that helps to establish or maintain positive relationships between your selected organization and its many publics:

- **Templates:** Create your own templates for a straight news release, fact sheet, pitch letter and media advisory, and feature story. You may use the textbook as a guide, but check it against the AP style guide because the textbook seems to have gone to print before AP was updated. These templates will serve as your writing guide as you produce content throughout the rest of the semester.
- **News Release series** - You will write 3 news releases (straight news). For these news releases you will pick a topic on a newsworthy event in Monmouth. It can be related to the college, department, or a student organization but it doesn’t necessarily have to. Your first news release will be in the Traditional format. The second will be formatted for email, and the third will be formatted for Twitter. You do NOT need a new topic for each. Rather you can take the same story and reformat it for the outlet. The objective here is to 1. Develop your skills at writing a straight news story, 2. Develop your skills with AP style and 3. Develop your skills at preparing stories for the 3 different formats.

- **Fact Sheet:** For this assignment you will create a fact sheet to go along with the news release series you just wrote. The objective here is to anticipate all the relevant information that isn't included in the story but might be useful to a journalist or editor.
- **Advisory:** write an advisory alerting the media to the event about which you wrote in your news release series. The goal is to create an advisory that will attract the media to your event.
- **Pitch letter** – For your next assignment you will write a series of news or feature stories that are related to one another and appropriate for the audience of the department's Facebook page. But first you need to write a pitch letter designed to get the editor (in this case, me) interested in supporting your story.
- **Facebook Story Series (3)**- Once your pitch letter is approved, you will develop a series of 3 stories centered on one common theme that would relate well to the people who like the departmental Facebook page (your target audience). Your theme must be pre-approved by the instructor to avoid duplication. Each story in your theme should be no longer than a page including any pictures or graphic elements. You must include at least 1 original photo and appropriate caption with each story.
- **Feature News Stories (2)** - Write 2 feature news stories that would be appropriate for publishing in a newsletter. The first should be directed toward an internal audience at Monmouth College (either students or employees or both). The second should be directed toward an external audience (alumni, community, donors, etc.) Both should be appropriate for publication in a newsletter. You must include at least 1 original photo and appropriate caption with each story.
- **Blog post** – Imagine MC or some component of it is your client. Write a blog post that reflects your engagement with current events, demonstrates you are “listening” to a larger conversation, and encourages ongoing conversation. Follow the tips and guides for writing blogs in the textbook. You must include at least 2 original photos with appropriate captions.
- **Radio Scripts** - You will write a series of scripts for radio and video. Write a 10 second and 30 second radio release and a 60 second PSA. The objective here is to develop your skills at writing for radio and video including controlling for the appropriate time allowed.
- **Media Kit** - put it all together into an outstanding Media Kit. Create a media kit for your client (either the department, MC, or the student organization you've been focusing on). You may use materials you created previously but you will also need to generate some additional materials to ensure your kit is complete.

Assignment Point Total

Assignment	Points Possible
Quizzes 11 @ 10 pts. each	110 points

Facebook Story Series 3 @ 20 pts. each	60 points
News Release series	60 points
PSA Video & Radio scripts	30 points
Photos & captions	60 points
Fact Sheet	20 points
Blog post	40 points
Brochure	40 points
Pitch letter & advisory	40 points
Feature stories 2@ pts 30 each	60 points
Media Kit	100 points
	Total 620 points

Grading for this course will abide by the following rubric:

Grade	Interpretation
A	Exceptional: Superior handling of the mechanical and conceptual material covered in class. Not only will "A" work synthesize materials covered, but also it will show some originality of thought, an unusual degree of clarity in expression, and an ability to contextualize ideas, explore implications, and/or raise meaningful questions.
B	Good: Timely completion of the assignment, demonstrating not only a grasp of the material under consideration, but the ability to synthesize the material rather than simply repeat what you have learned. "B" work goes beyond minimum requirements outlined in the assignment, and represents work above average.
C	Average: Timely completion of the assignment, demonstrating a solid grasp of the material. "C" work shows me that you understand the material under consideration. "C" is the standard grade and all assignments are made with this in mind.
D	Poor: Meets the requirements established, but demonstrates serious flaws either in conceptual formation or mechanical limits.
F	Unacceptable: Fails to meet the mechanical or conceptual requirements of university work. Mechanical matters would include: Timely completion, length, grammatical concerns, and focus. Conceptual matters would revolve around the comprehension of and/or relationship between ideas.

Semester Schedule

Revised 9/24/15

Week	Topic/Reading	Assignments Due
Week 1: Aug 25	Introduction to the course. Ch 1 - "Getting Organized for Writing."	Ch 1 quiz
Week 2: Sept 1	Ch 2 - "Becoming a Persuasive Writer." Chapter 3 - "Finding News."	Ch 2 quiz Ch 3 quiz
Week 3: Sept 8	Ch 4 - "Getting Along with Journalists and Bloggers." Ch 11 - Legalities	Ch 4 quiz Ch 11 quiz
The Basic PR Writing Formats		
Week 4: Sept 15	Ch 5 – Writing Traditional news releases Social media news releases	Ch 5 quiz
Week 5: Sept 22	Workshop news releases News releases	Draft of 3 news releases due
Week 6: Sept 29	Ch 6 - Preparing Fact Sheets, Advisories , Press Kits & Story pitches	Ch 6 quiz Draft of fact sheet
Week 7: Oct 6	Ch 7 – Creating News Features and Op-Ed	Pitch letter & advisory draft Ch 7 quiz
Week 8: Oct 13	Facebook story writing	Facebook story drafts
Week 9: Oct 20	Fall Break	Facebook stories
Week 10: Oct 27	Features	Feature story for internal audience draft Feature story for external audience draft
Week 11: Nov 3	Ch 12 -- Websites & Social media: Facebook & Twitter	Ch 12 quiz Blog story draft
Week 12: Nov 10	Ch 13 – Newsletters, Magazines, & Brochures	Ch 13 quiz Brochure copy draft
Week 13: Nov 17	Ch 8 – Publicity Photos & Graphics	Ch 8 quiz Photo & caption series drafts
Week 14: Nov 24	Ch 9 – Radio & Television scripts	Ch 9 quiz Radio & tv script drafts
Week 15: Dec 1	Press Kit	Press kit
Week 16: Dec 8		