

Journalism 351-A Public Relations Media

Fall 2007

Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.

GFS-207

TEXT REQUIREMENTS:

Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques, fifth edition, by Dennis L. Wilcox
Current AP Stylebook
Dictionary

Please bring these to class each week as you'll likely need them for in-class writing exercises.

Additionally: Read *The Los Angeles Times*, at least one other newspaper such as *USA Today*, and a news magazines such as *Newsweek* and *TIME*; watch television news, magazine and interview shows; listen to radio news and talk radio. In other words, be familiar with a wide array of news media and be up on current events.

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

What defines the media: Who are they? What do they do? Where are they? How do they get their stories?

What is the role of the public relations professional in regards to the media? Who are we? What do we do? What is our alliance with the media? How do we best do our jobs: for our clients and for the media?

In this class, we answer these questions and delve deeply into the roles of and relationship between the media and public relations.

We will write and write some more. News releases, fact sheets, advisories, pitch letters, features, photos and captions, press kits...all the varied collateral the public relations professional provides the media will be dealt with in this class.

The success of the public relations professional has as much to do with writing ability as anything else. The ability to write well, write creatively, to capture the attention of your audience can be your ticket to an exceptional career. Also, we'll look at media events: press conferences, special events, interviews, photo shoots.

There are numerous ways to get to the media. We'll explore them.

INSTRUCTOR:

Kate Flynn Jacobs

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WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:

1. Class starts at 9 a.m. I know it's early, but that can't be helped. Chronic tardiness will affect your final grade, as will absences. **You don't have to ask me for permission to miss a class, leave early or come late.** I leave those decisions to you. Since we only meet once a week, however, missing class will leave a gap in your learning. I suggest you find someone in class you can call to get notes/assignments/handouts from any missed classes.
2. Assignments are due to me at the time I designate. Faxed assignments are not accepted. You are allowed one late assignment that will be graded a full grade lower and is due by 9 a.m. Wednesday following our class. If you forget your homework, it is considered late. All assignments will be complete and typed. No copy editing on final versions.
3. Class participation will help your final grade. This is public relations, after all. I like input from all students and it certainly makes for a more interesting class.
4. There will be no make-ups for the mid-term. There will be no extensions for the final project. You must complete the mid-term and final project to pass the class.
5. There will be quizzes. If you are late and a quiz is in progress, you may not take it, nor can you make it up.
6. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a fellow student. I do not e-mail notes or hand-outs. Check on Blackboard for current class information.
7. Please do not use computers during class except for writing assignments or as assigned by me. No e-mail checking or Internet surfing during class time.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME:

Now that I've scared you, let me help you relax...

1. I love teaching and come to class each week with enthusiasm and a strong desire to help you learn. My goal is to help you prepare for the world of public relations.
2. I am open to your questions and welcome the opportunity to discuss any issues concerning you. Please don't hesitate to talk to me.
3. I am fair. When you get a paper back from me, you'll have a good idea why you earned the grade you did and what can be done to improve your writing. However, if things are not clear, let's talk. The more discussion, the better the understanding.
4. This syllabus is a general guideline for what we will cover during the semester. Other assignments, such as written homework and class projects will be assigned. In addition, we will have in-class writing most weeks.
5. I'll guide you along to improve your writing, but feel free to help guide our discussions. Bring to class your questions, observations and opinions about how you see the role of public relations at work in the real world. Our most pertinent and interesting class time will come from what's happening in our world today.
6. I am available for questions and conversations before and after class and by appointment. Ready access is through e-mail. I will respond to all messages within 24 hours, unless my message service indicates otherwise.

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**THE FOLLOWING IS THE USC SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM'S ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY.
PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY.**

Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one's own; in journalism, this includes appropriating the reporting of another without clear attribution. The following is the Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity as published in the University catalog: "Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and will be dismissed as a major from the School of Journalism. There are no exceptions to this policy."

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. The office is located in the Student Union room 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

ELEMENTS OF 351-A

In-class assignments
Take-home writing assignments
Analysis Reports
Mid-Term Examination
Final project: press kit
Participation
Reading
Quizzes

GRADING

Writing assignments	25%
Mid-Term Exam	20%
Press Kit	35%
Homework/Quizzes	10%
Participation	10%

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

1. Aug. 28 LET'S GET GOING

Housekeeping: Presentation of syllabus. Going over class requirements and outlining of what to expect over the semester.

Down to business: Beginning to define who are the media and what do they need or want with the public relations professional.

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Aug. 28 continued...

Homework:

Read Chapters 1 and 5

Bring to class a news story you think includes the handiwork of a PR pro. Type a brief summary on why. Be prepared to discuss.

2. Sept. 4 ABOUT THE NEWS RELEASE

The news release: what is it, what does it look like, how do you write one.

In Class: Review of news stories with PR bent.

Homework: Read Chapters 2 and 4

3. Sept. 11 THE NEWS RELEASE CONTINUED

Now that we've gone over how to write one, how do we write a good one. Discussion of the fundamentals of good writing and how to fine-tune your press release. Paying attention to details.

First Project: The Media Analysis Report

Homework: Read Chapter 8 and 14, pages 408-418

4. Sept. 18 THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN NEWS RELEASES

We'll examine the gamut of media collateral, among them advisories and pitch letters. What are the differences, what are they used for, and when to use them.

Homework: Read Chapter 6

5. Sept. 25 WHAT MORE CAN I POSSIBLY THINK OF TO WRITE?

We've begun to master the news release, now what? Feature stories, backgrounders, bios – other ways to hook the media.

Homework:

Read Chapter 7

Bring to next class a photo that ran in a newspaper or magazine that you think was supplied by a PR professional.

6. Oct. 2 A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

How to develop good visuals to sell your story; setting up good PR photos; writing captions; and selling your story through pictures.

In class:

Review of photos

Reminder: Press kit proposals due next week.

7. Oct. 9 PRESS KITS

What do they look like; what's in them; who uses them and why.

Press kit proposals due today.

In class:

MID-TERM REVIEW

8. Oct. 16 MID-TERM EXAMINATION

Homework: Read Chapters 17

9. Oct. 23 PRESS EVENTS

What works and almost as importantly, what doesn't. Giving the press kit flexibility to meet the needs of different audiences.

Media Events: press conferences, parties, press events. When to use them, when to avoid them and how to throw them.

In Class: Media Analysis Reports continue.

Homework: Read Chapter 11

10. Oct. 30 SPECIAL GUEST

The relationship between the public relations and the media.

In Class: Media Analysis Reports continue.

Homework: Read Chapter 10

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11. Nov. 6 PITCHING THE MEDIA

How to talk to the media; when to talk to the media; what media to target; how to get your story delivered. Making sure your pitch isn't the tree that falls in the forest when no one is in the forest.

Homework:

Bring to class a news report of a disaster or crisis. Evaluate where you think a PR hand played a part in the story.

12. Nov. 13 CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

How to extinguish – or at least contain – the fire of the day. What to do when your worst media nightmare comes true.

In class: Review of crisis stories

13. Nov. 20 INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

PRESS KITS DUE TODAY

How to prepare for an interview. How to develop key messages. How to weave main points into responses. How to deal with the tough questions.

Homework: Read Chapter 9

14. Nov. 27 INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES CONTINUED/WORKING THE WEB

How to give the best radio, television or print interview. How to find your best voice and/or look. The dos and don'ts of interviews.

15. Dec. 4 LAST CLASS ROUNDING UP, DOWN AND ALL AROUND

Review and discussion of what we've covered. Press kits returned.

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