

**USC School of Journalism  
Public Relations 351B  
Spring 2008 Syllabus  
Tuesday 6:00 – 9:20 p.m.  
Stefan Pollack, Adjunct Professor**

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**Contact Information:           Stefan Pollack**

**Class Schedule:**

<u><b>Date</b></u>	<u><b>Spring 2008 Class Subject</b></u>
Jan-15	♦ Presentation of Syllabus; Overview of Class Projects
Jan-22	♦ What Constitutes “Well Written?”
Jan-29	♦ Know Thy Audience
Feb-5	♦ Feature Writing/Midterm Project Overview
Feb-12	♦ Persuasive Writing and the Power of the Written Word
Feb-19	♦ Newsletters
Feb-26	♦ Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder – Design
Mar-4	♦ Brochures, Brochures, Brochures
Mar-11	♦ Presentations and Visual Aids
Mar-18	♦ NO CLASS – Spring Break
Mar-25	♦ Practice Pitch
Apr-1	♦ Mid-Term Pitch
Apr-8	♦ Interviewing Techniques
Apr-15	♦ The Bits and Bytes of Writing in Cyberspace
Apr-22	♦ Office Hours
Apr-29	♦ Presentation of Term Projects

**Course Description:**

This course is designed to teach students about the array of public relations tools available to them, with particular emphasis on writing, public speaking and production of communications “collateral.” Students will be exposed to feature writing, brochure development, audience segmentation, newsletter preparation, basic principles of publication design, writing for the ear, making oral presentations and brainstorming. Case histories will illuminate the use of these tools and examples of materials will be used extensively throughout the course. This is a lab course; a great deal of hands-on activities such as writing, graphic design and oral presentations will be assigned.

**Course Objectives**

Upon completion of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify and communicate with a variety of audience groups.
2. Write and edit print and materials such as newsletters and brochures.
3. Understand basic design and layout using widely accepted design software.
4. Prepare and present a complete PowerPoint presentation.

**Course Expectations:**

<b>Course Requirements:</b>	<b>Grade Emphasis:</b>
• Class attendance and participation.	<b>10%</b>
• Midterm "Pitch."	<b>25%</b>
• In-class writing assignments. • At-home research and writing assignments. • Required and recommended reading.	<b>30%</b>
• Term project (takes place of final).	<b>35%</b>

**Participation Mandatory**

Your grade is based in part on your participation during class. You do not have to seek permission or forgiveness for missing a class or coming late, but your ability to participate is undoubtedly affected by your being present and able to participate.

**Professional Conduct During Class**

You will be expected to treat this class as you would a business meeting. You must arrive early, be prepared, provide value to the class discussion, conduct yourself professionally and remain courteous and sensitive to the interests of others in the meeting. All pagers and cell phones **MUST** be turned off or to silent mode so as to not disturb the session. (There will be one break at each session during which time you may check messages/pages, etc.) **There is an emphasis on oral presentation skills in this class – this includes your weekly presentation of thoughts, ideas and responses to discussion in each session.**

**No Late Assignments**

You must turn in assignments when they are due even if you know you will miss class. Unless otherwise specified, all assignment must be submitted to Pollack's electronic dropbox (ebox) on Blackboard before the beginning of the class in which they are due.

If you miss a session, it is up to you to contact someone in the class (another student) to find out what you have missed and what is due next. This is especially important on in-class writing assignments that are often taken home to polish.

**Text/Reference Materials:**

- We will distribute reading assignments regularly.
- Current AP Stylebook is required (bring to class when in-class writing assignments are noted on the syllabus).
- Recommended reading: brochures, newsletters (printed and online), organizations' Web sites (corporations, non-profit organizations, etc.).

USC Policy on Academic Integrity

Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be dismissed from the Annenberg School. There are no exceptions to this policy.

PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

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 the school's policy."

Academic Accommodations

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP (STU 301, 213-740-0776). Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible.

**Detailed Course Outline:**

**January 15 – Presentation of Syllabus; Overview of Class Projects**

The syllabus will be presented along with the course description and expectations. We will explore what “Controlled Media” is, how and when it is used, and what forms we will be addressing in class. An overview of the midterm and final term projects will be presented. *We will start the course with writing about you.*

***In-class writing assignment:*** Write a resume cover page convincing me why you are the ideal candidate for my entry-level job opening. Assume that I, as the potential employer have never met you nor seen your resume and this is your letter of introduction. How will you introduce yourself with the written word? How will your cover page stand out from the stack on our desk?

***Homework assignment:*** Bring to next session an example of an article you consider to be “well written.” It *must* be from a form of controlled media (i.e., *not* traditional news media, e.g., speech, brochure, newsletter article, letter). Each class member should be prepared to discuss *why* he/she believes his/her chosen article is well written. PLEASE NOTE: *you are not doing a book report; a general discussion of content is fine, but your comments should center on those elements that led to your ranking this piece so highly!*

**January 22 – What Constitutes “Well Written?”**

This class will examine the fundamentals of good writing. Is it an exact science? Do we adhere to the strict “inverted pyramid” format? The instructor will unveil who would have been hired from last week’s in-class writing assignment based on how well it was written. Each student will present his or her selected article from last week’s homework assignment and explain why you consider it to be well written. We will also discuss the importance of seeking third-party review of your work to help improve its quality. Specific techniques for editing and incorporating the input of others will be demonstrated.

***In-class writing assignment:*** Rewrite your cover letter. Take it to the next level of persuasion, incorporating what you have learned in class.

***Homework assignment:*** Edit two classmates’ letters (save an electronic version – redlined – of your edits). Likewise, incorporate the edits of your letter from two classmates. Also, find and bring to next session an article from any source of controlled media that is targeted to ANY specific audience except college students. *Come to class prepared to define and discuss your term project with the class.*

**January 29 – Know Thy Audience**

Before you embark on any assignment, you need to understand with whom you are communicating. We’ll explore how the Gen Y, Gen Xers differ from Baby Boomers; how age, ethnicity and gender factor into messaging; and, which audiences you will likely encounter in the public relations field. *You will also be asked to share the organization that you identified to do your final term project on.*

***In-class assignment:*** Working in assigned teams, utilize one of the team members’ articles from the homework assignment to dissect that article’s specific audience and present your findings to the class. *The findings will be presented in the same form that will ultimately be used in the final term project.*

***Homework assignment 1:*** Taking the article you brought to class, identify the audience it targets. Then, rewrite the headline and first four paragraphs to take the same article/topic and

target it to a completely different audience. You will be asked to hand in the original article in next week's class.

**Homework assignment 2:** Bring to class a (1) well-written, (2) persuasive, (3) feature writing sample and be prepared to discuss why you believe it fulfills these standards.

### **February 5 – Feature Writing/ Midterm Project Overview**

*First, we will review last week's in-class assignment and compare and contrast how differently the same topic can be communicated.* Building on the principles learned in 351A, we will discuss the nuances of feature writing. We'll discuss human-interest articles, editorial and opinion pieces, humor, irony and an array of feature writing techniques. *At some point during the evening, we will meet the "client," to whom we will pitch our mid-term project, and determine what the client's needs and goals are.*

**In-class writing assignment:** Work with groups to plan for and organize your mid-term project.

**Homework:** Bring to class a (1) well-written, (2) persuasive, (3) feature writing sample and be prepared to discuss why you believe it fulfills these standards.

### **February 12 – Persuasive Writing and the Power of the Word**

The written word is very powerful. It can shape *and change* minds. Persuasive writing can initiate action and change. We will first review some of the examples of persuasive writing that you brought to class and discuss what makes them – and other forms of communication – persuasive.

**In-class assignment:** We will collectively brainstorm some topical controversial public policy issues in which organizations (for or non-profit) may be involved in the debate. Taking from the list we collectively brainstormed, select a topic and write a persuasive piece (you decide – a flyer, advertorial, feature article, etc.). You must be very persuasive and convince your target audience about your topic.

**Homework:** Bring an example of a newsletter to class, and read articles on Newsletters (assignment given in class).

### **February 19 – Newsletters**

Due to technological advances in both production and printing, these hallmarks of communication are thriving. What are they? Why do they work? Who reads them? When don't they work? How is the Internet changing the style and content of newsletters? We will review the newsletters you brought to class and discuss them as a group. We will discuss the fundamentals of newsletter design, layout and distribution.

**In-class writing assignment:** Write a feature article for the newsletter you brought to class. *\*\*\*Be prepared to discuss your term project topic with the instructor individually during this in-class writing assignment.*

**Homework:** Take your article home to edit/put final touches on it. Please hand in the original newsletter with your article at the beginning of next session. Also, bring to next session a sample of a brochure. *Come prepared to discuss your final term project topic with the instructor.* Be prepared to discuss content, layout and publication objective in class. *Come prepared to discuss the progress of the mid-term project with the instructor.*

### **February 26 – Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder – Design**

We will learn some of the basic elements of design that are often used in controlled media.

***In class workshop:*** Quark tutorial during which you will help design a brochure as a class.

#### **March 4 – Brochures, Brochures, Brochures**

We will delve into the mechanics of brochure development including content, graphics, layout and production. How do informational publications fit into the communication and marketing mix? We will examine the visual elements and distribution mechanisms for brochures.

***In class assignment:*** Work with a partner to cut and paste a two-page spread “the old fashioned way” with scissors and glue! Then we will discuss the progress of the mid-term project as a group.

***Homework:*** *Come prepared to discuss the look, feel and design of your final term project.*

***Homework:*** **Work with your team to finalize your preparation for the midterm pitch**

#### **March 11 – Presentations and Visual Aids**

***\*\*\*\*\*You should be prepared to discuss the overall look/design of your term project at this class meeting.\*\*\*\**** There is an array of tools available to you as a presenter. We will discuss the options and review some of the techniques for creating a stellar presentation for any size audience.

***In-class assignment:*** In a group, identify a subject; then create and deliver a multi-media presentation.

***Homework:*** *Term project outline and analysis – you will create a memo detailing the rationale, outline and design of your project. Due at beginning of next session.*

#### **March 18 – NO CLASS – Spring Break**

#### **March 25 – Practice Pitch Delivered to Instructor/Class**

We will spend the class working on finalizing the midterm pitch to be delivered next week

***Homework:*** Work with your team to finalize your preparation for the midterm pitch.

#### **April 1 – Mid-Term Pitch**

#### **April 8 – Interviewing Techniques**

*Anyone can conduct an interview, right? We’ll discuss how to take control of the interview and gather interesting facts from your subject(s). We’ll also review how a successful interview can “make or break” a good article.*

***In-class assignment:*** You’ll conduct an in-depth interview with a classmate. The interview will result in a presentation you will make to the class in next session.

***Homework:*** Work on your term project!

#### **April 15 – The Bits and Bytes of Writing in Cyberspace.**

***\*\*\*\*\*You should be prepared to discuss the overall look/design of your term project at this class meeting.\*\*\*\**** We will review the differences between writing for the electronic medium that have become such an important piece of the media mix, and traditional writing. Emphasis will be on the

content and overall design, with some very basic review of technical challenges and requirements (no HTML coding required!).

***In class assignment:*** Work with a partner to convert one of your previous assignments (in-class or homework) into electronic medium.

***Homework:*** Work on your term project!

**April 22 – Office Hours**

***Note: Instructor office hours are extended between now and your final presentation.***

**April 29 -- Final Presentations**

### Mid-Term Class Project: Pitch

Early in the semester, the class will identify a mock organization that needs public relations assistance, particularly in the development of collateral materials (newsletters, brochures, web content, etc.). *This organization will not be the same organization that any class member is producing their final term project for.* The class will meet with the “client,” who will explain their challenges and goals.

The class will work together as a team to pitch the client on why they should be hired. The pitch will include samples of materials developed, including a newsletter, a brochure, and a web element (e.g., e-newsletter, web site, intranet page, etc.). Each team (class) will work together to develop the overall strategy and plan for the pitch, then will divide the work between three groups (each focused on developing a different aspect of the pitch). The team will finalize their pitch together with the instructor’s feedback and input, then present the proposal to the client. The client will provide feedback at the end of the “mid-term” session and provide the class with feedback on their performance.

#### **The pitch will consist of a presentation to the client that:**

- Communicates the team’s understanding of the client’s situation
- Outlines a strategy for communications, with rationale and (if appropriate) research to back up that strategy
- Presents details of the elements of the plan (including a review of the content and design of the communications materials)

*(NOTE: the client will **not** consider team or individual team member experience as a factor in their decision.)*

#### **Each student will be responsible for:**

- Participating in the coordination and logistics of preparing for the pitch
- Supporting the team by playing an appropriate role and fulfilling assigned responsibilities, as the team designates
- Planning, writing, designing, laying out, and producing any or all aspects of the pitch and pitch materials, as appropriate and designated by the team

#### **Each student’s grade will be based on:**

- Their individual contributions to the team (based in part on peer assessments) and fulfillment of responsibilities listed above
- The quality of their group’s contributions to the team’s overall pitch
- The team’s performance in the competition
- Whether the team is chosen by the client

The presentation and materials that are developed need to be sufficient to convince the client to hire the team. However, the materials developed for the pitch (example newsletter, brochure, etc.) do not necessarily need to be completed projects (i.e., the full editorial content of a newsletter issue).

## Final Term Project – Journalism 351B

For your term project, you may choose to produce either an eight-page newsletter or brochure. The purpose of the project is for you to have the experience of producing bona fide public relations materials that can be powerful additions to your job portfolios!

Regardless of which item you select, you will be expected to:

- Identify a company or an organization to be the subject of your project
- Research and write all copy
- Design and produce a mock copy of your chosen project
- Present your project to the class

You will be producing a publication from scratch. This means you will select a topic and a theme; gather information about the chosen organization or company; write all copy<sup>1</sup>; select graphic elements (photos, charts, logo, graphs, illustrations); determine where all of the copy and graphics will go in the final piece; and, **prepare an 8-10 minute presentation in which you discuss the overall project**, the challenges you faced and any recommendations you might have for your classmates.

There are checkpoints indicated on your syllabus to help you stay on track.

Helpful Hints:

- 1. Identify your organization and get materials early in the semester.**
- 2. Don't wait until the last minute to design/format/produce your project.**
- 3. Don't go to Kinko's or another printer the day before your project is due.**
- 4. Plan ahead!**

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<sup>1</sup> Copy can be adapted from existing materials but a majority of the writing must be original.