

Public Relations Writing

Oklahoma City University
Spring 2016
MCPR 2013-01 - 3 credit hours
11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. MW
Walker Center, Room 158

Professor

Kenna Griffin

Office: Walker Center, Room 117

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I have an open-door policy and am happy to discuss public relations with you at any opportunity. You do not have to schedule an appointment to discuss course-related matters with me. If you want to guarantee an uninterrupted one-on-one that will take longer than 15 minutes, I encourage you to schedule an appointment to ensure that we can provide one another our undivided attention.

Required Texts & Course Materials

Associated Press. (2014). In Christian, D., Jacobsen, S. & Minthorn, D. (Eds.), *The Associated Press Stylebook*. New York, NY: The Associated Press.

Materials posted in the course Facebook group

Note: Others may be added during the semester.

Recommended Texts

Good public relations practitioners (and citizens) are well-informed news consumers.

You should read *The Oklahoman* (newsok.com) and OCU campus news on MediaOCU (www.mediaocu.com) every day and weekly in *The Campus* newspaper (published on Wednesdays). I recommend you get into the habit of reading at least one daily metropolitan newspaper and a weekly news magazine. I also recommend you watch at least one televised newscast each day.

In addition, I recommend that you visit and participate in discussions on my media blog, www.profkr.com. The site acts as a resource for students and an open forum for discussion of trends in our profession. You can follow the blog on Twitter @profkr. You also may follow my blog and other industry news on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ProfKRG.

Responsible citizens are avid news consumers. Information is the key to a democratic society. Develop the habit of daily news consumption now if you haven't already.

Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to introduce you to the form, style and technique of public relations writing. The course will provide experiences in the various forms of writing for public relations, including press releases, media memos, public service announcements, backgrounders, position

papers, speeches, and persuasive copy structure used in non-profit and corporate brochures, annual reports and newsletters. Class sessions will be a combination of lecture/discussion sessions (Mondays) and writing labs (Wednesdays).

The objectives of this course are:

- To introduce students to more advanced writing activities and to build on basic writing skills already learned,
- To instruct students on how to create a variety of written documents,
- To enable students to understand the rhetorical aspects of the public relations writing process, and
- To reinforce AP Style.

Grading

I will attempt to grade all class assignments and return them to you during the next class session. You are encouraged to visit my office to discuss any questions or concerns you have about your grades on individual assignments or in the course as a whole. You are strongly discouraged from openly discussing your grades during class sessions. Your grade for the course will consist of grades in five categories:

- Final exam – 30 %
- Midterm exam – 20 % (50 % at midterm)
- Final project – 20 %
- Labs/Quizzes – 20 % (40% at midterm)
- Attendance/participation – 10 %

NOTE: You will receive an automatic F (55 percent or less) on any writing assignment that contains a spelling error or a misspelled name.

NOTE: Be certain to sign the attendance sheet during every class session. It is the method I will use for tracking your attendance. If you will miss class for a university-sanctioned happening, I must have a notice beforehand from the appropriate university official. Failure to provide such documentation will result in your absence being counted against you. You are encouraged to submit due assignments before your absence. If you are unable to do so, you must arrange it with me and submit any assignment at the beginning of your return class session.

Exams

You will take two exams in this course, a midterm and a final. Exams will cover materials up to but not on the exam date. I will provide a review sheet for each exam. Each exam will have two parts—an essay portion and a lab portion—which will be administered on separate days.

The midterm exam is from **11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. March 7** and **11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. March 9**. It is worth 20 percent of your final grade, but is worth 50 percent at midterm.

The final exam is **11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. April 27** and **10 a.m. to noon May 4**. It is worth 30 percent of your final grade.

You are not allowed to leave the classroom or lab during the exam without submitting it as completed. You are not allowed to talk during the exam. No electronic devices other than lab computers will be allowed in use or out during exams. You also are not allowed to use class notes during the exams. Any violation of this policy will result in you receiving zero credit for the exam in question.

You should plan to take the exams at the scheduled time. Make-up exams will be given only in extreme emergencies (aka: death or near death). I am unlikely to approve a make-up exam. If I do, the make-up exam will be more academically rigorous than the original.

Final project

You will complete a media kit for a company or organization of your choice as your final project in this course. More information will be provided about the final project as the class progresses. You likely will be given some time in class to work on the project. However, you should assume that the majority of the work will be done outside of class.

Labs

We will meet on Wednesdays for writing labs in the Mass Comm lab. I will give you a handout explaining the lab assignment at the beginning of the class session. Labs will be due at the end of the class session, unless I state otherwise. Missed lab assignments cannot be made up. Failure to attend class on the designated lab day will result in a zero. Failure to complete the lab within the course session will result in your grade being lowered accordingly.

Quizzes

You will be given an Associated Press Stylebook quiz every Monday. These quizzes will be given during the first 15 minutes of the class session and cannot be made up. If you miss for any reason, you will be given a zero for that day's quiz. If you are late, you will be required to submit your quiz with the last on-time student or at the 15 minute mark, whether the quiz is complete or not.

The quizzes are meant to ensure that you learn components of grammar and style necessary for writing professional public relations materials.

Quizzes will be 10 questions worth 10 points each. No partial credit will be given.

You are not allowed to leave the classroom during a quiz without submitting it as completed. You are not allowed to talk during quizzes. You can use your AP Stylebook during the quizzes. You are not allowed to use fellow students, their stylebooks or myself as resources.

Griffin's grades:

My grading of writing is not arbitrary. I award writing grades based on the following standards:

- **A** – Content is publishable with little editing.
- **B** – Content is publishable with minor editing and revisions.
- **C** – Portions of the content would need to be rewritten and closely edited before publication.
- **D** – Copy contains major factual, structural, writing, and usage flaws. It is doubtful whether it could be published. It definitely could not be published without major work.
- **F** – Copy does not meet even minimal standards for the assignment. This grade also is received if a name is misspelled or there is a spelling error in the writing.

NOTE: The AP Stylebook should be used for all writing assignments. You are responsible for using correct spelling, grammar and word usage from the start of the semester.

Deadlines

Deadlines are critical in the media business. Do not attempt to submit work after the deadline. It will not be accepted. There are few exceptions.

Missed Assignments

Missed assignments cannot be made up without my approval. I will not accept assignments sent to class with peers. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain any assignments, handouts and notes that you miss. I will not contact you regarding your absence. I also will not save copies of course materials distributed during individual class periods. If you need an extension on an assignment because of an absence, you must schedule a time to privately discuss it with me. If you miss an assignment and are allowed to make it up, you must do so at the scheduled time or you will not receive credit.

Attendance

Public relations practitioners must be reliable. Missing deadlines can cost you your job.

Course attendance and participation are required and will be counted as 10 percent of your final grade. You are expected to arrive to class on time and leave when class is complete.

At this point in your academic career you should understand the concept of decisions and consequences. You are free to make your own decisions regarding your attendance. However, it's important that you are aware that lack of attendance in any class will result in you missing important material that will not be repeated. In addition, repeat absences will result in the lowering of your final grade.

If you cannot avoid missing class, you must notify me prior to the class session. Do not assume that I know you will not be present. Communicate with me regarding every necessary absence. Notification of an absence from anyone but yourself will not be considered adequate. Do not send word of your absence via another classmate. I will give excused absences on a case-by-case basis.

Remember: ***You make choices. You live with the consequences.***

Participation

You are required to participate in class. Participation could include commenting on readings, interactive lecture, and careful and active note taking.

It is essential for you to keep pace with the assigned readings to survive this course.

Asking questions always is encouraged. Discussion of things unrelated to class is discouraged. You are not allowed to be disruptive in any way that takes class value from your classmates.

You must always attend class prepared for participation. This includes having paper, writing utensils, books, etc. during every class session.

Technology

You are allowed to use a laptop, iPad or smart phone to take notes during the course session. You are not allowed to have your cell phone ringer or alert notifications on during class. Students found texting or using cell phones or computers for anything other than note taking

during class will be asked to discontinue the practice or leave. Repeated issues will result in lowering of your attendance/participation grade.

Printing

Assignments must be completed outside of class, unless otherwise directed. All assignments must be typed and stapled.

You will not be excused from class to print assignments. Do not come to class to discuss printing with me. It is up to you to determine if you should be late to class to print.

If you do not have access to a computer and/or printer, you are welcome to use the mass communications computer lab at the front of our department.

Malfunctions of the equipment in the computer lab will not constitute an excuse for a late assignment.

Course schedule

This schedule is tentative and subject to change. I will move ahead in the lecture if we complete a subject early.

Week 1:

Monday, Jan. 11

- Course introduction

Wednesday, Jan. 13

- Lab: Free Writing
- Lab: Stylebook

Week 2:

Monday, Jan. 19 – MLK Day. No Class.

Wednesday, Jan. 20

- Lab: Stylebook

Week 3:

Monday, Jan. 25

- Lecture: Understanding Rhetoric
- Stylebook Quiz 1

Wednesday, Jan. 27

- Lab: Email Pitches

Week 4:

Monday, Feb. 1

- Lecture: Writing News Releases
- Stylebook Quiz 2

Wednesday, Feb. 3

- Lab: News Release

Week 5:

Monday, Feb. 8

- Lecture: Writing Photo Captions

- Stylebook Quiz 3

Wednesday, Feb. 10

- Lab: Photo Captions

Week 6:

Monday, Feb. 15

- Lecture: Writing Backgrounders, Fact Sheets and Media Memos
- Stylebook Quiz 4

Wednesday, Feb. 17

- Lab: Backgrounder

Week 7:

Monday, Feb. 22

- Lecture: The Art of Editing and Proofreading
- Stylebook Quiz 5

Wednesday, Feb. 24

- Lab: Fact Sheets

Week 8:

Monday, Feb. 29

- Lecture: Aesthetics: Creating Visual Appeal
- Stylebook Quiz 6

Wednesday, March 2

- Lab: Design basics
- Midterm review

Week 9:

Monday, March 7 – Midterm Exam, Part 1

Wednesday, March 9 – Midterm Exam, Part 2

Monday, March 14 - Friday, March 18 – Spring Break. No Class!

Week 10:

Monday, March 21

- Lecture: Persuasion and Professional Writing
- Stylebook Quiz 7

Wednesday, March 23

- Lab: Professional letter

Week 11:

Monday, March 28

- Lecture: Creating Newsletters
- Stylebook Quiz 8

Wednesday, March 30

- Lab: Newsletter

Week 12:

Monday, April 4

- Lecture: Writing for Print, Broadcast and Online
- Stylebook Quiz 9

Wednesday, April 6

- Lab: Script

Week 13:

Monday, April 11

- Lecture: Writing Opinion with Value
- Stylebook Quiz 10

Wednesday, April 13

- Lab: Blog

Week 14:

Monday, April 18

- Lecture: Creating Speeches and Presentations
- Stylebook Quiz 11

Wednesday, April 20

- Lab: Speech

Week 15:

Monday, April 25

- Final Exam Review
- Stylebook Quiz 12

Wednesday, April 27 – Final Exam, Part 1

Wednesday, May 4, 10 a.m. to noon – Final Exam, Part 2

Mass Communications Departmental Policies

LATE WORK:

- No late work will be accepted for full credit without prior arrangement with the instructor.
- Work is due at the beginning of the class session.

EXAMINATIONS:

- No makeup examinations will be given unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor.
- NO FINAL EXAMS WILL BE GIVEN EARLIER THAN ANNOUNCED BY THE INSTRUCTOR. NO EXCEPTIONS. Students who make travel plans without confirming the scheduled finals date for this class do so at their own risk. Students who travel prior to the scheduled final exam will be unable to take the examination and must accept a zero test score.

INCOMPLETE:

Incomplete grades are not a student option except under extreme circumstances. Students seeking an incomplete must submit a written request supported by documentation verifying the need for this extension. Incompletes are given for a limited period of time.

TARDINESS/ATTENDANCE:

Students are expected to be in class on time. Entering the classroom late is unprofessional and disruptive. Repeated tardiness is unacceptable. Students should be punctual and prepared, since these are the qualities expected by the business community. Attendance will be taken at each class session. Students are expected to attend all class sessions.

GRADING SCALE:

93.0 - 100	=	A	
90.0 - 92.99	=	A-	
87.5 - 89.99	=	B+	
82.5 - 87.49	=	B	
80.0 - 82.49	=	B-	
77.5 - 79.99	=	C+	
72.5 - 77.49	=	C	
70.0 - 72.49	=	C-	
67.5 - 69.99	=	D+	
62.5 - 67.49	=	D	
60.0 - 62.49	=	D-	
Below 60.0	=	F	Not I or W

CHEATING/PLAGIARISM:

STANDARD OF RESPONSIBILITY

Oklahoma City University was founded upon strong values and high standards. Honesty in academics is a priority. Students should be advised that cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. The Academic Honesty Policy can be found online at <http://starport.okcu.edu/ad/aa>

Cheating is defined as using, or supplying information that is not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination or completing any other assignment. Cheating also includes turning in another's work and representing it as being your own.

Plagiarism is defined as a unique form of cheating where persons turn in another's work and represent it as being their own. This would include: 1) purchasing term papers and turning them in as if they are original work; 2) using a paper that has previously been turned in; 3) copying passages verbatim from books, articles, etc.; 4) submitting material for grades in which the student has not done the work required; 5) collusion – the unauthorized collaboration with another person; 6) misrepresentation of actions and 7) falsifying information.

Every student is expected to observe the highest standards of conduct, both on and off the campus. The University cannot accept the responsibility for the education of any student who is not in sympathy with the purposes and the regulations of the University.

Mass Communications students should be aware that this department considers the above-described conduct to be dishonorable and dishonest. Students found cheating or plagiarizing will receive a grade of "0", which is an "F", on the involved examination, project or paper and, at the professor's discretion, may receive a failing grade for the entire course.

EXAMINATION EQUIPMENT:

Students are not permitted to use or access the following items during an examination:

- Dictionaries
- Electronic spellers, translators, dictionaries or calculators
- Computers
- Class notes, books

Once any examination has begun, if a student wishes to leave the room they must be prepared to turn in their examination paper and/or blue book. And, it will not be returned to them for additional work.

DISABILITY STATEMENT:

If you believe that you need accommodations for a documented physical, psychiatric, or learning disability, please contact the Disabilities Services Coordinator at (405) 208-5090 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. The Student Disabilities Services Coordinator is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students a documented Access Plan, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact the Student Disabilities Services Coordinator as soon as possible. To speak with the coordinator about other concerns, such as medical emergencies or arrangements in case of a building evacuation, please make an appointment as soon as possible.

PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds, including federal loans and grants. Title IX also prohibits student-to-student sexual harassment. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk with your professor or with the Title IX Coordinator at 405-208-5075. Visit <http://www.okcu.edu/hr/titleIX/> for more information.

EVACUATION POLICY:

The evacuation plan for Walker Center is as follows: Everyone on the first floor proceeds out the north doors to the north parking lot. Everyone on the second floor must exit down the north stairway, out the north doors to the parking lot. The shelter locations for Walker Center are as follows: WC 143, WC 144, and the men's and women's restrooms on the first floor. These rooms are on the east side of the first floor.

POLICY STATEMENT

I have read the above stated policies for the Spring 2016 semester for the Mass Communications Department.

I understand the policies and agree to abide by them.

Name

B#

Date

Course Name and Number