



School of Advertising & Public Relations
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION
University of Tennessee Knoxville

Syllabus

Course Dates: Jan. 14–Apr. 28, 2015

Time: 11:10–12:25 p.m.

Location: Com 316

Michael L. Kent, Ph.D.

MKent3@UTK.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday, 2:30–4:30 p.m.

Office: 865–974–3048

Skype/WeChat: MLKent

PUBL 320—Public Relations Writing

Description

Public relations professionals deal with diverse audiences and multiple stakeholders. Public Relations Writing teaches you the basic principles associated with writing in an assortment of styles and to multiple publics. Skilled communicators also understand persuasion, rhetoric, and communication theories. You will learn how to write specialized documents like backgrounders, brochures, business letters, pitch letters, informational graphics, and news releases. You will also begin credentialing and portfolio building. AP style, sensitivity to cross cultural issues, multiple stakeholders and publics, and ethics, are emphasized. Given the importance of new technologies we will also spend time exploring technologies, learn how to write for different technologies, learn about the persuasive and informative potential of various technologies, and discover how to use technology on behalf of organizations and clients.

Student Course Objectives

- Students will learn how to create a variety of standard written documents, and how to write for different audiences and occasions.
- Students will be introduced to more advanced writing activities, and acquire the skills needed to succeed as a professional writer.
- To prepare students to analyze, critique, and apply, rhetorical and communication skills and principles to public relations writing.
- To introduce students to an assortment of communication, public relations, persuasion, and rhetorical theories and provide them with opportunities to adopt and hone their writing and editing skills.
- To explore ethical issues associated with communicating with multiple publics, and provide students with the skills to make effective and compelling ethical decisions.
- To introduce students to new technologies useful in public relations.
- To reinforce AP style rules and use.

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all.”

Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

Readings (required)

The Associated Press Stylebook 2015 Spiral bound. Order it online or buy it at the bookstore. You should own it already, and an older edition is fine.

PDFs of the textbook are available from (<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hq4puq17vo603d5/AAD-EEZ-v8VDsXHkQf2Rnf2Eha?dl=0>). Additional readings made available throughout the semester.

Class Policies

- As future professionals, my preferred mode of communicating with you is face-to-face. Come see me during office hours or whenever I am around. Relationships are not build electronically.
- Do your readings and come to class prepared to talk—if you are nervous about participating, come talk to me for some ideas about how to succeed.
- Bring printed and marked up hard copies of class readings to each class, or bring your readings up on the class computer. You should read on paper and not the computer screen whenever possible.
- Try to spend time with each other outside of class in the flesh, not on just social media.
- No phones, smartphones, tablets, headphones, or other technology, open, secretly checked, or accessible during class.
- Readings and assignments are due in class on the date indicated.
- All assignments not completed in class must be *printed*, **and** submitted electronically, and will be automatically checked via *SafeAssign*.
- *Careful proofreading, spell checking, and AP style is required on all writing.*
- My vision is not what it used to be. Consequently, I prefer a very legible font like *Bookman Old Style* 11 point. Never use *Times New Roman*. *I will provide Bookman O.S. to you if you need it.*
- If you must miss class because of a religious holiday, you need to tell me ahead of time (at the beginning of the semester), and take steps to make up the missed class *before* you miss it.
- All work should be your own. Never cheat. Be aware that plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Cite whatever is not your own original ideas or writing (including prior papers from other classes). *Plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment and/or the class at my discretion, and will be reported as an academic integrity violation.* Note: Plagiarism detection software will be used for all assignments. These products work *very well* and check the Internet, journals, books, previous class papers submitted to the system across the world, and bespoke papers that teachers have uploaded. Why would you risk your career over a lower class grade? I received Cs, Ds, and Fs in classes, it really is not the end of the world, and is a lot better than being kicked out of school over something so small. Be sure to know the University of Tennessee's Academic Standards of Conduct and Honor Statement, in [Hilltopics](#).
- **Attendance is required** or your final grade will be reduced. You get two absences without penalty, and two with a final grade penalty (–5% and –10%). After five absences you will fail the entire class. However, if you must miss a class above your allotted absences, see me *ahead of time* about making arrangements to cover the class via Skype, etc. Professionals make arrangements when they have to miss work or events.

“I know that you believe that you understood what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.”

Robert McCloskey

Diversity and Ethics

We are intellectuals. Consequently, we should respect diversity in all of its forms: race, sex, gender, age, religion, political orientation, country of origin, economic status, etc. Everyone in the U.S. (citizen or visitor) has a right to his/her opinion and should feel comfortable sharing their views. As citizens, we are under no obligation to agree with what other people believe, however, we must, as a civil society, support people's right to worship, act, look, and think, as they want. In this classroom, we will not tolerate any mistreatment of others because of how they look, what they believe, where they come from,

The most striking contradiction of our civilization is the fundamental reverence for the truth which we profess and the thoroughgoing disregard for it which we practice.

Vilhjalmur Stefansson

or because of a lack of knowledge or skills beyond their control. The only thing that we will not be tolerant of is a lack of ethical and moral fiber. As Donald M. Erb said: “Do not be tolerant of misrepresentation, of superficiality, of the parading of false issues as though they were real issues. Tolerance does not extend to intellectual dishonesty or ineptitude” —*Plaque, Erb Memorial Union, University of Oregon, 1990.*

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that allows for accommodation, please contact me immediately. Be sure to also contact the Office of Disability Services, discuss your specific needs and obtain official documentation before the class begins. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services in Dunford Hall, at 865-974-6087, or by video phone at, 865-622-6566, to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Open Records

Public Law 93-380 requires me to protect the confidentiality of educational records for prospective, current, and former students. Grades cannot be discussed via e-mail, or with other people like parents, siblings, friends, etc.

Grading

A 95-100, **A-** 90-94; **C+** 77-79, **C** 73-76, **C-** 70-72;
B+ 87-89, **B** 83-86, **B-** 80-82, **D+** 67-69, **D** 63-66, **D-** 60-62; **F:** 0-59
NB: A C- does not count as a C for purposes of passing required classes.

Assignments

Portfolio (Develop an online portfolio of your work, add all existing work to it. Add All work completed throughout the semester—Draft 1 Req., D2 graded)	10%
News Release (Three drafts, 5-7 paragraphs, details provided)	10%
Fact Sheet (Three drafts, 500 words, based on a model you obtain, details provided)	10%
Backgrounder (Three drafts, 1,000 words, based on model, details provided)	10%
Brochure (Three drafts, 500-550 words, based on model, includes images, details provided) ...	10%
Pitch Letter (Three drafts, 500-600 words, details provided).....	10%
Exams (3 @ 10%, AP Style, Persuasion, Communication Theories)	30%
	Subtotal, 90%
Your Choice 1: _____ (see assignment list for details).....	_____ %
Your Choice 2: _____ (see assignment list for details).....	_____ %
Your Choice 3: _____ (see assignment list for details).....	_____ %
Extra Credit: Find samples of public relations documents (0-5%)	_____ %
<hr/> Total	100-110%

New Technology Focused

You will become experts on three social media tools and be exposed to dozens more throughout the semester. Identify a list of ten (non-mainstream) social media that you might like to explore. Rank them from 1-10, with ten being your first choice, and I will try to give you your top three

choices. **Excluded:** Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube, Webo—or other international sites if you speak that language already, and others.

Assignment Details

“Your Choice” assignments

The points for the class must add up to 100%. Your required assignments only add up to 90% so that you can pick 1–3 additional assignments to do that fit into your own interests or expertise. You only have to contract for 100% for the class—one additional assignment—to pass the class and obtain an A. However, you may contract for up to three additional assignments, instead of just the one, and for up to 110% in possible points.

Exams

There will be three exams based on 3 major issues from the course: AP Style, Persuasion, and Communication Theory. The format of the exams may vary. Exam 2 or 3, for example, may be take home, or essay/activity based, while exam 1 might be given online. I’ll keep you informed. Your feedback will be considered. Please come by office hours and talk with me.

Portfolio

Early in the semester you will create an online portfolio of your professional work. Portfolios should contain a sample of the range of your work before this class starts, at this early stage of your career. All or most of your existing work will go in now. The hard part of this assignment is finding an electronic portfolio provider that does what you want, is easy to update, and allows you to exhibit all of the different types of professional work you might create as public relations professionals. *Two drafts are required*, an ungraded draft that I will provide feedback on, and a graded draft that you will improve on as the semester progresses.

Note: for all assignments: If no ungraded draft is prepared, you cannot submit the final draft for a grade without using your GOJF card (which would allow you to do another draft).

For all assignments you must obtain samples ahead of time that you will submit with your assignment, that I will keep, and one of which you will use as a model for your own design. *Start looking for sample documents immediately.*

News Release

The typical news release is about 1.5 pages long. In actual fact, there no longer is a “typical news release” given the ways they are used electronically now on web sites, etc. (you will learn more about this). But we will pretend that a standard form of news release exists (Kent’s style), as you learn more about them, and as you learn the techniques for how to write them effectively.

For this and all future writing assignments you are required to do three drafts: *Draft 1* will be prepared as close to perfect as you can, and brought into class and peer edited—always bring three copies of your documents to class on peer editing days. See me during office hours if you want additional feedback ahead of time.

Fact Sheet

Fact sheets are informational documents that can range from 1-page to 50-pages in length. The typical fact sheet is 1–2 pages long. Fact sheets and most other public relations documents except for letters and news releases also include aesthetic features. I.e., they are professional looking, highly legible, include images, and are often intended to be persuasive documents. Fact sheets are more than a list of bullet points on a page, as you will learn, and have a very broad range of uses. Your document must be professional looking not just created in MS Word.

Note: Fact Sheets, Backgrounders, Brochures, and other writing assignments provide you with opportunities to build on the publication skills you learned in 310 Design. I expect to see creative designs and adherence to professional publication and design skills. See me if you need any help on InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator, or other programs.

Backgrounder

Backgrounders are more of a historical document and are written typically for informational/persuasive purposes. An organizational backgrounder could be anywhere from 1–25 pp. or more long, often utilizing a narrative or conversational tone. Like fact sheets, backgrounders also are professionally designed and have a compelling and organizationally consistent layout.

Brochures

You have all seen a thousand brochures. There are many kinds: trifold, quadfold, gatefold, accordion, etc. You will learn all about them as we proceed. You will make a brochure, professionally designed, and with original content. Your brochure will be based on one of the samples that you obtain, so be sure to select one to model that you are capable of reproducing. Using Microsoft Word will not be possible for most brochure designs.

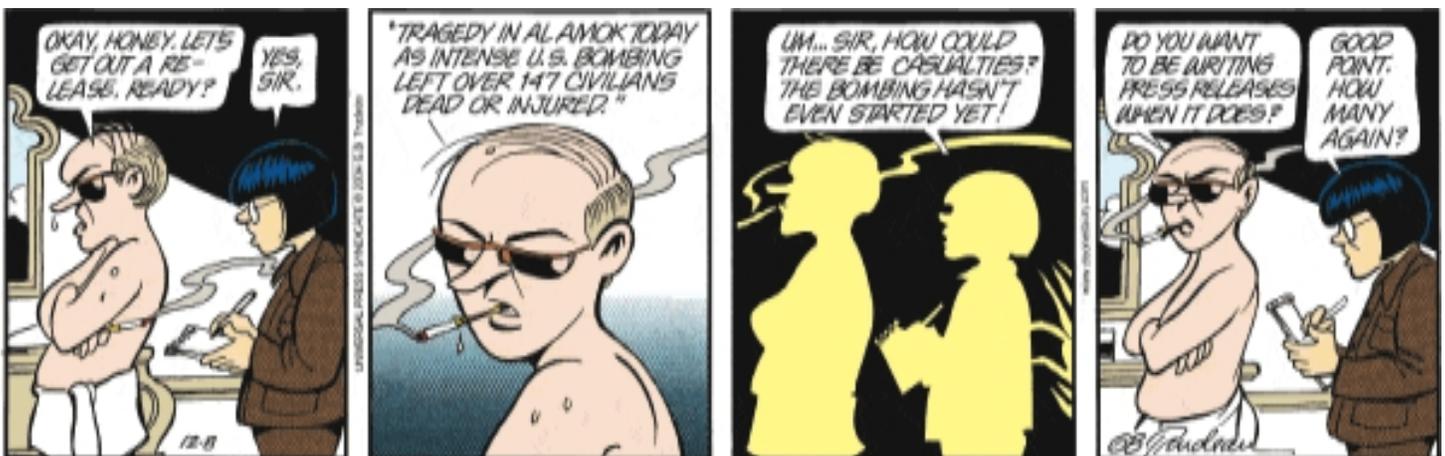
Pitch Letters

Pitch letters, as the name implies, are used to pitch an idea or story to someone else. Pitch letters are part of the genre of business/professional letters in general, and persuasive letters such as letters of recommendation, letters of application, letters to the editor, letters to get into college or graduate school, etc. in particular. Writing letters of various kinds is a common activity for professionals, so take advantage of the opportunity to rethink your letters of application for internships, etc. as you do the assignment.

Note Carefully

1. There is no extra credit in the class because you can contract for extra credit from the first day of class.
2. You cannot add additional assignments as you go on, however, if you decide you have not performed as well as you would like. You can drop assignments that are not required.
3. *All required assignments (required for everyone) must be completed to pass the class.* I.e., if you contract for 110% worth of assignments and do not complete one of the “your choice” assignments, that is fine. But you cannot skip one of the required class assignments because you decide you have done well on your other assignments and do not need it. All assignments must be complete to pass the class.

Later in the syllabus there is a list of “typical public relations activities” as well as a list of what samples of those particular assignments might be worth. By day three of the semester you need to get me your contract and I will send you your individual assignments. See me with questions.



Class Schedule: PBRL 320: Public Relations Writing—Tentative

Date	Day	Readings/Assignment	Assignment Due
Jan. 14	1	Content: Introduction Read a dozen news releases from various organizations and be prepared to talk about them in class.	
Jan. 19	2	Content: Portfolios & News Releases Read: ... 00 Forward, and 01 Intro.	
Jan. 21	3	Content: News Releases Read: 05 Writing for Mass Media	Portfolio D1
Jan. 26	4	Writing Headlines and Leads	News Release D1 (bring 3 copies to class)
Jan. 28	5	Read: 02 Rhetoric	News Release D2
Feb. 2	6	Read: 03 Editing, 04 Aesthetics	
Feb. 4	7	Fact Sheet Assignment Read: 06 Persuasion	Portfolio D2 News Rel. D3
Feb. 9	8	Writing for Fact Sheets	
Feb. 11	9 91 Ua %f5DGmY	
Feb. 16	10	Australia Persuasion (flipped class)	Fact Sheet D1 (bring 3 copies to class)
Feb. 18	11	Australia Micro-blogging persuasively (by Video & Class activity)	Fact Sheet D2
Feb. 23	12	Read: 09 Speeches/Presentations	
Feb. 25	13	Backgrounders Writing speeches for others	Fact Sheet D3 (Bring copies for everyone)
Mar. 1	14	Your Social Media Tools	Backgrounder D1 (bring 3 copies)
Mar. 3	15	Read: 10 Dialogue	Backgrounder D2
Mar. 8	16	Activity: Using Dialogue	Your Choice 3
Mar. 10	17	<i>Exam may be proctored by TA</i>	Exam 2 (Persuasion)
Mar. 15	18	Spring Break I will be in Hong Kong so see TA for assistance	
Mar. 17	19	Spring Break I will be in Hong Kong so see TA for assistance	
Mar. 22	20	Brochure Layout Read: 12 Software	Backgrounder D3
Mar. 24	21	Writing Pitch Letters Writing Using Acrobat	Brochure D1 (bring 3 copies)
Mar. 29	22	Content: "Social Media Week" (SMW) stuff Read: TBA	Brochure D2
Mar. 31	23	IABD , No class, Attend 2 SMW Events and Blog about them.	
Apr. 5	24	Chapter Assigned for day 25 Read: 11 Intercultural	Your Choice 2
Apr. 7	25	Writing International & cross-cultural audiences Read: Chapter assigned from <i>Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands</i> ...	Brochure D3
Apr. 12	26	Writing Typography	Pitch Letter D1 (bring 3 copies)
Apr. 14	27	Read: 13 Ethics	Pitch Letter D2
Apr. 19	28	Activity: Ethics	
Apr. 21	29	Student Driven Content	Pitch Letter D3
Apr. 26	30	Student Driven Content	Your Choice 1
Apr. 28	31	Party?/Student Driven Content	All GOJF Revisions due
May 6	32	Friday, 12:30–2:30 FINAL EXAM DAY.	Exam 3 (Theory)

Assignment

Points

Portfolio (Develop an online portfolio of your work, add all existing work to it. Add all additional work completed throughout the semester—Draft1 Req., D2 graded).....	10%
News Release (Three drafts, 5–7 paragraphs, details provided).....	10%
Fact Sheet (Three drafts, 500 words, based on a model you obtain, details provided).....	10%
Backgrounder (Three drafts, 1,000 words, based on model, details provided).....	10%
Brochure (Three drafts, 500–550 words, based on model, includes images, details provided).....	10%
Pitch Letter (Three drafts, 500–600 words, details provided).....	10%
Exams (3 @ 10%, AP Style, Persuasion, Communication Theories).....	30%
Subtotal, 90%	

Your Choice 1: _____ %

Your Choice 2: _____ %

Your Choice 3: _____ %

Extra Credit: Find samples of public relations documents (0–5%, I assign points) _____ %

Total _____ %

Note: total must equal 100–110% (Select 1-3 additional writing assignments that are worth 10–20%)

Full Name (print), as per roster

Sign

Date



Sample Points for Possible Writing Activities

1. News release (basic 5–7¶ release): 5%
2. Backgrounder: 5–10%
3. Letter (cover, fundraising, invitation, information gathering, pitch, recommendation, solicitation, thank you, etc.): 5%
4. Fliers (tent signs, name badges, event signs, etc.): 5%
5. Advertising copy (more than a few sentences, like an issue advertisement): 5%
6. *Design* a poster, banner, billboard, transit sign, advertisement, etc.: 5%
7. Write a series of PSAs (10, 20, 30, 60 second): 5%
8. Write a memo: 5%
9. Pamphlet: 5–10%
10. Create/design infographics: 5–10%
11. Create/design stationery/business cards: 5–15%
12. Create/design a Bulletin/Program: 5–10%
13. Meet/Interview community leaders, government officials, journalists, politicians, professionals/experts, etc.: 5–20% (depending upon how many)
14. Design a direct mail package: 5–10%
15. Take photographs, or oversee a commission for an illustration or artwork: 5–10%
16. Write a feature story: 10%
17. Create a fact sheet: 10%
18. Organize a speakers bureau or ongoing event (Blog, Web site, etc.): 10%
19. Write/create a brochure: 10–15%
20. Write or deliver a speech or presentation: 5–20% (see below)
21. Write a report: 5–20%.
22. Write a white paper or research paper (position paper): 10–20%
23. Editing/proofreading: 5–20%
24. Design a point-of-purchase display: 5–10%
25. Developing/creating media and informational kits: 5–10%
26. Design/create an online portfolio, website, chat room, knowledge network, etc.: 5–20%
27. Write content for, create/design, etc., a newsletter: 5–20%
28. Plan a news conference or special event: 10–20%
29. Research for a campaign, etc.: 5–20%

Speeches

- Biography: 10–20%
- Debate: 10–20%
- Demonstration: 10%
- Informative: 5–20%
- Persuasion: 10–25%
- Persuasive sales: 10–20%
- Special occasion (introduction, motivational, celebration, memorial, eulogy, etc.): 5–20%

Typical Public Relations Activities, Strategies, and Tactics

- Write a news release, backgrounder, fact sheet, pitch letter, flier, pamphlet, bulletin, brochure, blog entry, tweet, social media post, etc.
- Write an op-ed article, letter to the editor, feature story, or issue advertisement.
- Write material for an annual report.
- Write a public service announcement or a film script.
- Write or deliver a speech.
- Write a White Paper (position/research paper).
- Write a research paper for a professional conference.
- Buy space for an issues advertisement in a newspapers and magazine.
- Buy advertising to support a new corporate initiative.
- Choose the graphics and color scheme for an organizational logo.
- Commission research, articles, or reports.
- Conduct environmental scanning: read local/national newspapers and industry periodicals, visit chat rooms, watch the local/national news and news programs.
- Conduct lobbying on behalf of your organization.
- Conduct meeting/interview via Skype etc.
- Conduct a network analysis of an organization.
- Coordinate/organize/host a special event, news conference, exhibit, open house, or annual stockholder meeting.
- Council organizational leaders or colleagues on best practices.
- Create or design a poster, billboard, transit sign, advertisement, point-of-purchase display, YouTube video, or direct mail package.
- Develop educational materials for public school.
- Develop, design, or select advertising specialties: pens, magnet, tote bags, coffee mugs, coasters, stress balls, etc.
- Develop or design a Web site, chat room, or knowledge network.
- Edit/Proofread documents: news release, annual report, brochure, magazine article, position paper, speech, advertisement, etc.
- Engage in issues management or crisis management.
- Gather and analyze analytic data.
- Implement and manage communication initiatives for employees—e.g., a telephone hot line, a bulletin board system, a company newspaper or newsletter, a quarterly video update, etc.
- Meet with city/state/national politician: congressperson, governor, senator, etc.
- Meet with community, city, state or federal leaders, or officials: mayor, school board member, city council member, police chief, ombudsperson, CDC official, etc.
- Meet with a journalist to discuss story ideas.
- Meet with a government bureaucrat, local/state inspector, etc.
- Meet with a spokesperson of a special interest group.
- Negotiate with individuals, organizations, publics, activists, etc.
- Organize or staff a speaker's bureau.
- Organize a dialogue, or train others in dialogic practices.
- Organize a workshop, professional conference, or news conference.
- Pitch story ideas to a reporter or editor.
- Prepare slides, take photographs, or commission an illustration or artwork.
- Prepare and advise a witness who will give testimony to government committee.
- Prepare and advise an executive who is to be interviewed on a local news network, cable television, or sixty minutes ("Mike Wallace is here to see you sir . . .").
- Represent your organization on a radio or television talk show.
- Research issues, stakeholders, theory or practices.
- Send (mail, e-mail, fax, courier) news releases, pitch letters, invitations, etc.
- Sponsor book, magazine, or television advertising or editorials.
- Testify before Congress or at a public hearing.
- Testify before a citizen's advisory panel or committee.

Get Out of Jail Free

This coupon entitles the bearer to *one* of the following. Please submit when claiming or requesting.

Check Box

- Eliminate or reduce a late penalty on *one* written assignment (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- Eliminate or reduce a time penalty on *one* speech/presentation (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- Rewrite *one* assignment (not already a 90% or above) within one week of it being returned.
- Make a “deal” with the instructor:**



Request (be Specific)

This card *may not* be used to:

- Change the date or time of an exam.
- Obtain a makeup exam.
- Obtain additional absences.
- Eliminate an attendance penalty.
- Eliminate a late-to/early-from class penalty.
- Receive credit for work done on the job or in another class.

This offer is subject to change without notice. Coupons must be redeemed at the time of use. This offer is non-transferable and carries no cash value. This offer does not apply to class penalties not listed in this document. The professor reserves the right to revoke this coupon at any time. Void where prohibited by law.

Name (print)

Sign

Date