

**Journalism 341 — Writing and Editing for Public Relations**  
**Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., Manzanita Hall 213**

**Professor:** Marcy De Veaux

**Office:** Manzanita Hall 365b

**Office Hours:** Mondays, 1- 3 p.m. and Thursdays, 12:30 -1:30 p.m.

**Phone During Office Hours:** (818) 677-7240

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**Course Description**

One of the core competencies in successful public relations is writing. This course provides extensive instruction and practice in writing for public relations. Students will write media releases, pitch letters, backgrounders, media alerts, fact sheets and biographies. You will also develop media lists and learn to write for the web.

By the end of the course you will develop a press kit for a new or existing business, create your own blog and work in a team on a multimedia project.

**Prerequisites**

A grade of C or better in J110 and J340

**Required Texts**

*Strategic Writing*, Second Edition, by Charles Marsh, David V. Guth, Bonnie Poovey Short.

*Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America*, Bruce Shapiro

*The Associated Press Stylebook 2006*

Readings from newspapers, online magazines, newswires and blogs will be assigned.

**Attendance**

Attendance will be taken during each class meeting. Any absences will keep you from learning how to write for public relations. Failure to attend each class meeting will cause you to lose valuable points on quizzes and assignments due during class meetings. *Missed assignments cannot be made up*, lost points will significantly lower your final grade.

## **Classroom Conduct**

Cell phones and pagers must be placed on vibrate at the beginning of each class. Students may not take calls or answer text and email messages during class time unless it is a dire, life-threatening emergency. Those who violate this policy will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period and will be marked absent. Private conversations are not permitted during lectures.

Additionally, this course will include lively, classroom discussions around issues of current events as they relate to public relations. All points of view will be heard and respected. Disrespectful language or conduct will not be tolerated.

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

Students can earn a possible 500 points for this course.

**1. Reading Assignments:** You will be quizzed on assigned readings from the textbook, *Strategic Writing*. You can earn up to 20 points for each quiz for a total of 80 possible points.

**2. Writing Assignments:** These assignments involve writing 10 different pieces that will support the public relations for a new or existing business. These weekly assignments are worth 20 points for a possible total of 200 points. Each week you will draft media releases using writing styles frequently found in public relations, pitch letters for both print and broadcast press, backgrounders, media alerts, a fact sheet and captions for photos. Your press kit will include story ideas and current topics related to your business to capture the attention of journalists. Your work for the semester will culminate in press kit to publicize your new or existing business.

**3. Blogging:** This assignment involves writing three, 300-word blogs on a topic of your choice. You can earn up to 20 points for each entry for a total 60 points for this assignment. This assignment is graded on your ability to use graphics, images and photography and to create 3 fresh, new stories on a single topic.

**4. Video News Release (VNR):** In teams of 5, you will create a video news release for your mid-term assignment. Each team will determine the subject of their VNR. Students can earn up to 60 points for their participation in this team project. You will be graded on your technical skills, and your ability to work in a team environment.

**5. Final Project:** Your weekly, corrected writing assignments for the semester will culminate in a press kit for a final grade of up to 100 points. This project will be

graded on creativity and sound public relations principles as well as content, grammar, punctuation and correct use of AP style.

**6. Extra Credit:** An additional 20 points can be earned for as extra credit by participating in the Department of Journalism's community reading project, *Shaking the Foundations: 200 Years of Investigative Journalism in America*. You will read four entries from *Shaking the Foundations* and write a five-page paper on the impact of investigative journalism in a democratic society. You must commit to completing this assignment by the third class meeting, which is September 10, 2009.

## **Grade Range**

500-450 points = A

449-400 points = B

399-350 points = C

349-300 points = D

Below 300 points = Fail

*The + and – grading system will be used.*

## **Cultural Diversity**

To ensure that your work reflects the diversity of the community, you are strongly encouraged to broaden your public relations experiences by focusing your assignments on ethnic, racial and religious minorities; the elderly, disabled and poor; gay men and lesbians; and other similar groups.

## **Plagiarism/Cheating**

The CSUN Journalism Department is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated, and anyone caught cheating will be reported to the University for possible further action. For a further explanation of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult pages 587-588 of the 2008-2010 CSUN catalog. Remember, too, that passing off information taken from the Internet as your own is plagiarism and carries the penalties outlined above.

## **About the Professor**

Marcy De Veaux has been a public relations professional for more than 20 years specializing in entertainment public relations and issues around diversity in corporations. She is president and CEO of her own public relations firm, DVG Communications. She is working toward a doctorate degree in Depth and Liberation Psychology and is currently researching and writing a dissertation.

Class Schedule  
(pending approval of furlough days for faculty)

August 27

Introduction and Course Overview

September 3

**Reading Assignment:** *Strategic Writing* section 1

**Writing Assignment:** Autobiography

**Lecture/Discussion:** Telling Your Own Story

September 10

**Reading Assignment:** *Strategic Writing* section 2, pgs. 31- 49

**Writing Assignment:** Announcement style press release and short teaser news release

**Lecture/Discussion:** Elements of style

**Quiz #1**

September 17

**Reading Assignment:** *Strategic Writing* section 2, pgs. 50-68

**Writing Assignment:** Feature news release and Hybrid news release

**Lecture/Discussion:** What does the press want?

**Blog entry #1 due**

September 24

**Reading Assignment:** *Strategic Writing* section 2, pgs. 69-87

**Team Project:** Video News Release team meetings

**FACULTY FURLOUGH DAY – NO CLASS**

October 1

**Reading Assignment:** *Strategic Writing* section 2, pgs. 98-111

**Writing Assignment:** Blogs

**Lecture/Discussion:** Blogging in public

**Quiz #2**

October 8

**Writing Assignment:** Writing for the Web

October 15

**Reading Assignment:** Social media and public relations in the news

**Writing Assignment:** Social media news release

**Lecture/Discussion:** Social media and public relations

**Quiz #3**

October 22

**Reading Assignment:** *Strategic Writing*, section V, pgs. 201-222

**Writing Assignment:** Executive biography and good news, bad news letters

**Lecture/Discussion:** Writing for corporate public relations

**Blog entry #2 due**

**Quiz #4**

October 29

**Lecture/Discussion:** Media Relations

November 5

**Team Project:** Video News Release team meetings  
**FACULTY FURLOUGH DAY – NO CLASS**

November 12

**Lecture/Discussion: TEAM PRESENTATIONS/VIDEO NEWS RELEASES**

November 19

**Writing Assignment:** Photo captions, fact sheets and story ideas  
**Lecture/Discussion:** Telling the story through photography  
**Extra credit papers due**

November 26

**THANKSGIVING - NO CLASS**

December 3

**FACULTY FURLOUGH DAY – NO CLASS**

December 10

**FINAL PRESS KITS ARE DUE AT 8:00AM**  
**BLOG ENTRY #3 DUE BY 8:00AM**

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