INSTRUCTOR: JEFF DUCLOS
TELEPHONE: (310) 374-0465
OFFICE: MZ 337
E-MAIL: jaduclos@aol.com

OFFICE HOUR: Fridays 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. and by pre-arranged appointment.

MAILBOX: Journalism Office MZ 210

I am only scheduled on campus one day a week. If you leave a message for me at the above phone number, send me a fax, or put something in my mailbox, please also send me an email so that I can make a point of checking my mailbox the next day I am on campus. Please make sure you have the receptionist date stamp anything you ask to have put in my mailbox.

Email is the best way to communicate with me. I check my email daily and typically respond within 24 hours.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This class provides the fundamental knowledge and the basic preparation required for the professional practice of public relations writing. At the core of public relations writing is an organizational purpose. You will learn to write with purpose and clarity. Rewriting, editing and communicating information in a way that creates understanding will be stressed. By the end of the semester, you are expected to be able to write media releases, pitch letters, brochures, backgrounders, media alerts, fact sheets, biographies, speeches, web pages and strategic public relations plans.

In addition, every week we will discuss current events through the prism of public relations in practice. Please, stay informed of the world around you.

PREREQUISITES: A grade of C or better in JOUR 110 or its equivalent, and in JOUR 340. Students must earn a C or better in this class in order to enroll in JOUR 398, JOUR 440 and JOUR 494 (internship). A C- does not count as a C.

TEXT BOOKS:


Secondary: 2009 (or newer) ASSOCIATED PRESS STYLEBOOK AND BRIEFING ON MEDIA LAW

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Department of Journalism strives to prepare its students to become well-educated, principled citizens who are capable of initiating careers as skilled journalists, public relations practitioners and other related communication professionals. The Department will help students to achieve the following objectives by the end of their program of study:

- Attain competency in writing basics such as grammar and punctuation, word usage and spelling, sentence and story structure and journalistic style.
- Attain competency in the gathering and critical analysis of information using such techniques as interviewing, observation and researching primary and secondary sources.
- Acquire expertise in thinking critically and creatively, while exercising news judgment, the organization and presentation of information in multiple journalistic forms (i.e., print, visual and electronic, and public relations).
- Develop an ethical basis for making journalistic and public relations decisions.
- Develop flexibility in working in evolving mass communication media and environments using a variety of technologies and techniques.
- Understand the historical, theoretical, legal and societal contexts within which journalists and public relations practitioners work.

HOW THE COURSE IS STRUCTURED

The first half of class is devoted to reviewing the textbook reading assignment, the previous week’s writing assignment, and discussing “The Associated Press Stylebook Question of the Week.” The second half focuses on learning how to write different public relations documents, including strategic public relations plans, biographies, backgrounders, media releases, pitch letters, speeches, brochures, media alerts, web content, crisis communication strategies and event plans.

Each student is expected to have secured a CSUN email account and learned to check it regularly. All emails related to the class will be sent only to CSUN email addresses. Students can forward emails from their CSUN account to another email address.

PREPARATION

You are expected to be fully prepared for each class. You may be called upon at any time during the class period to answer questions regarding the lecture, required textbook readings, current events, or AP style.

Correct grammar, spelling and composition are basic class expectations. Work submitted that does not meet minimum criteria must be rewritten and will not receive full credit. The Learning Resource Center is a free on campus resource if you need assistance with your writing skills. It is located in Bayramian Hall 408 (formerly Student Services Building). The phone number is (818) 677-2033 and the web site is http://www.csun.edu/lrc/
ATTENDANCE

Your presence in this class matters – it matters to me and it matters to your fellow students. Our time together in class is valuable and if you are absent, your absence alters the class dynamics. If you make the decision to miss a class, you are missing an integral part of the course as most classes include interactive exercises that accrue toward your class participation grade.

Attendance will be taken at the start of every class. You are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. If you cannot make it to class, you must call or email me prior to the start of class to obtain an “excused absence.” Any unexcused absences will negatively impact your participation grade, as will excessive excused absences.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

You must turn in your assignments on time. Deadlines are essential in public relations, so no late assignments will be accepted. Work must be turned in promptly at the start of class to receive full credit. If you walk into class late, your paper will be accepted but you must write a large “L” on the cover prior to submitting it to me. These “L” papers cannot receive full credit. No papers will be accepted after the end of class. If you call in absent, you must have your paper date stamped and put in my mailbox prior to the starting time of class or it will not qualify for credit.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Please note: Changes in the course schedule might be necessary to best achieve the desired outcomes for the course. All changes will be announced in class. You are responsible for such information and announcements provided in class.

There are five (5) gradable components to the course, each with a maximum number of achievable points. The total point value for all objectives is capped at 600 points – the highest possible score.

1. Ten weekly writing assignments – The skills of writing are learned by doing. Weekly writing assignments are worth 20 points each for a possible total of 200 points. Assignments include a variety of current writing forms and styles used in day-to-day public relations communications. They are graded on the basis of content, grammar, punctuation and correct use of AP style.

2. Ten Weekly reading assignments: You will be quizzed based on assigned reading from Public Relations Writing Worktext: A Practical Guide for the Profession. Quizzes are noted in the course progression and are worth a maximum of 10 points each for a possible total of 100 points.

3. Midterm Exam – An essential skill for a professional public relations writer is working from Associated Press Stylebook. Learning what kinds of information it contains is a significant part of this course. I do not expect you to memorize the stylebook. I expect you to get in the habit of consulting it to determine proper writing form as you review and revise draft documents. To that end, throughout the course we will examine an “AP Tip of the Day” to help you acclimate to this writing style. For this test, you will be provided a draft press release for review. Using what you have learned to date on AP
style, and the stylebook as a resource (this is an open book test), your assignment is to revise this document consistent with AP style. The test is worth a maximum of 50 points.

4. **Final Project** – Public relations writing is always purposeful and primarily that purpose is to effectively advocate something in an attempt to influence or persuade. This final assignment focuses on advocacy writing. You will be required to create a position paper (a document designed to be read), an accompanying speech (a document designed to be spoken), a press release, and an Op-ed article on a single topic or cause. These documents must meet professional standards, strongly establish a public position, and persuasively express a point of view. Speeches are generally written for other people to give, so part of this assignment will be to provide a speaker to present your work product during the final class period. This assignment is worth 200 points. Your grade is based on effort, creativity, content, grammar and punctuation, where applicable.

5. **Participation** – This component is worth 50 points and is based on class participation, in class group exercises, keeping current with assigned readings, knowledge of current events in public relations, and attendance and punctuality.

**EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES**

You will have an opportunity for extra-credit options (up to 20 points) that will be added to your grand point total if turned in at the beginning of the last regularly scheduled class meeting. Details for these assignments will be provided during the semester.

**Grade Range**

- 600-540 points = A
- 539-480 points = B
- 479-420 points = C
- 419-360 points = D
- Below 360 points = Fail

The + and – grading system will be used.

Other pertinent information:

**ROOM DECORUM**

It is essential for everyone to help maintain proper classroom decorum. This includes: (1) arriving on time; (2) respecting students around you by limiting your talking (except during class discussions, of course); (3) limiting your leaving and returning; and (4) making sure cell phones and pagers are turned off.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM / CHEATING**

True professionalism in public relations is based upon honesty and the highest ethical standards. The 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 disciplinary action. Further explanation of the behavior defined as cheating, and more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures are described in the university catalog.
Also remember that much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws. Passing this information off as your own is a violation of CSUN’s plagiarism policy and carries the penalties outlined above.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Students in this course are strongly encouraged to broaden their journalistic and public relations experience, with the instructor’s help, by including in their work people and subjects such as ethnic, racial and religious minorities; the elderly, disabled and poor; gay men and lesbians; and other similar groups. The intent is to ensure that students’ work reflects the diversity of the community.

ASSISTANCE

My specific office hour has been provided. Feel free to drop by anytime I’m there; however, preference must be given to those who have previously signed up for an appointment. I look forward to talking with you about your course work, future career goals and other professional questions.

If you need additional help, please schedule a time to see me. If you cannot make times set aside for my office hour, please call, email, or see me before or after class. If needed, we’ll set up a special time. In the event of an emergency, do not hesitate to call me or email me. I will be happy to help you, but it is your responsibility to initiate the request for assistance. Don’t wait until it’s too late!

CLASS PROGRESSION

Please Note: Similar to a PR plan, this Class Progression may be revised and adjusted before completion. Any changes will be announced in advance of the class session affected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August 30</th>
<th>Introduction, Course Overview and Syllabus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction Exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Assignment</td>
<td>Create a biographical Sketch of no more than five sentences a paragraph or no more than 1500 words a paragraph.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Assignment for Next Week</td>
<td>Chapter 8 (p. 136 and p.139 Exhibit 8.4)</td>
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<tr>
<th>September 6</th>
<th>QUIZ: #1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Assignment</td>
<td>#1 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Assignment for Next Week</td>
<td>Public Relations Writing Worktext, Chapters 2 and 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture/Discussion</td>
<td>Basics of PR and writing tips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
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| September 13 | **QUIZ: #2**  
*Reading Assignment for Next Week:* Public Relations Writing Worktext, Chapter 9  
*Lecture/Discussion:* Planning, message design and creativity  
*Class Exercise:* Write like a Beatnik. |
| September 20 | **QUIZ: #3**  
*Lecture:* Websites, Social Networking, and more  
*Guest Speaker:* Chris Bechtel, Make Good Social  
*Reading Assignment for Next Week:* Public Relations Writing Worktext, chapters 4 and 6 |
| September 27 | **Writing Assignment: #2 Due**  
*Reading Assignment for Next Week:* Public Relations Writing Worktext, Chapters 3 and 8  
*Lecture/Discussion:* News Releases/Interview Skills |
| October 4   | **QUIZ: #4**  
*Writing Assignment: #3 Due**  
*Reading Assignment for Next Week:* Public Relations Writing Worktext, Chapter 7  
*Lecture/Discussion:* Art of the Public Apology / Feature Stories |
| October 11  | **QUIZ: #5**  
*Writing Assignment: #4 Due**  
*Reading Assignment for Next Week:* Public Relations Writing Worktext, Chapter 10  
*Lecture/Discussion:* Media Alerts/Fact Sheets/Event Planning |
| October 18  | **QUIZ: #6**  
*Writing Assignment: #5 Due**  
*Reading Assignment for Next Week:* Public Relations Writing Worktext, Chapter 13  
*Lecture/Discussion:* Ethics/Legal Issues/Professionalism |
| October 25  | **QUIZ: #7**  
*Writing Assignment: #6 Due**  
*Reading Assignment for Next Week:* Public Relations Writing Worktext, Chapter 12  
*Lecture/Discussion:* Writing brochure and newsletter content |
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>November 1</td>
<td>QUIZ: #8&lt;br&gt;Writing Assignment: #7 Due&lt;br&gt;Lecture/Discussion: Communications during a crisis&lt;br&gt;Reading Assignment for Next Week: Review AP Stylebook</td>
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<td>November 8</td>
<td>Midterm Exam&lt;br&gt;Reading Assignment for Next Week: Public Relations Writing Worktext, Chapter 11</td>
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<td>November 15</td>
<td>QUIZ: #9&lt;br&gt;Writing Assignment: #8 Due&lt;br&gt;Reading Assignment for Next Week: Public Relations Writing Worktext, Chapter 14&lt;br&gt;Lecture/Discussion: Pitch Letters/Media Relations</td>
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<td>November 22</td>
<td>QUIZ: #10&lt;br&gt;Writing Assignment: #9 Due&lt;br&gt;Lecture/Discussion: Speech Writing</td>
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<td>November 30</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Recess – Enjoy!</td>
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<td>December 6</td>
<td>Writing Assignment: #10 Due&lt;br&gt;Final Projects Due/Presentations Begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 13</td>
<td>Finish Presentations (no exam!)</td>
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