



PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING—COMM 335
FALL 2011 (Term 117)
MWF NOON, EDUCATION CENTER 110

INSTRUCTOR: Patrick Harwood, Department of Communication
OFFICE: R.S. Small Building, Room 126-- If dropping off work, please slide it under my office door. Please note: Homework is never accepted by email.
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OFFICE HOURS: MWF 1:30-2:30

Textbook: 1. “Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques” by Dennis L. Wilcox (Allyn & Bacon, 6th Edition. 2009)—Be sure to bring this book to class each day. 2. “Associated Press Stylebook”

Course Objectives

The primary goal of this course is for students to develop practical PR writing skills while generating a broad awareness and knowledge of how PR is integrated into marketing and communications programs. More specifically, you will:

- Build on the concepts learned about public relations in previous classes
- Translate concepts into concrete, written works.
- Develop writing skills tailored specifically for the public relations profession
- Evaluate various channels for effective public relations opportunities and develop writing skills for various outlets
- Gain a broader understanding of the profession with an emphasis on how and why public relations is integrated into an organization’s marketing and communications strategy
- Apply the textbook and classroom discussion to “real world” public relations situations by discussing headlines and issues of the day
- Tap into current communication technology for producing and disseminating news releases, newsletters and websites
- Develop a professional portfolio of writing samples to show prospective employers (save all the news releases and other work for this)
- I hope to bring in two or more guest speakers (recent Comm grads)

Attendance Policy

Please be in class on time! Coming in late is very distracting and doing it repeatedly will demonstrate poor planning and inconsideration. Roll will be taken each day. Five unexcused absences will result in an automatic final grade deduction of half a letter grade. Repeated tardiness will also be noted and could affect your final grade.

Exams

There are two exams - a midterm and a final. Each exam covers content covered in the textbook. The exams may also test your knowledge of key concepts of writing, including AP Style, as well as PR tactics, strategies and theories. A study guide will be posted on our class website one week before each exam. The exams will be a combination of true/false, multiple choice, short answer, Associated Press writing style, and PR-type writing, such as news releases.

Exam grading scale: A 94-100; A- 90-93; B+++ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83; C+ 77-79; C 74-77; C- 70-73; D+ 67-69; D 64-66; D- 60-63; F—59 and below

Homework and Quizzes

Homework will be assigned with the book chapters, specifically the Skill Building Activities at the end of each chapter. These papers must be typed and double-spaced and should show comprehension of material, accuracy and creativity. There may be unannounced quizzes related to chapters in the book after they are assigned for you to read.

Final Grade Determination

Midterm and Final Exams	40 percent
Book homework, quizzes and other assignments (use check plus, check, check minus grading system for these)	20 percent
Letter grade written pieces	20 percent
End-of-semester portfolio (to be detailed)***	10 percent
Newsletter Project	10 percent

***Save everything you do in this class: all homework and projects (on computer)

Final Grades: A (Superior)=4.0; A-=3.7; B+ (Very Good)=3.3; B (Good)=3.0; B-=2.7; C+ (Fair)=2.3; C=2.0; C-=1.7; D+=1.3; D (Barely Acceptable/Passing)=1.0; D-=.70; F (Failure)=0.0

Extra Credit Opportunities

You can have points added to your test scores by writing news releases on communication and media-related speakers and events at the College of Charleston and around Charleston this semester. Up to three points can be added to your lowest test score per extra credit. Maximum three such pieces per student (meaning you can earn up to nine extra credit points). These can be turned in up to exam.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Please note about this schedule: This is often updated before each class so be aware that this schedule changes from the one you may print early in the term. Specific homework for each chapter is listed but is subject to change. I will go through this schedule each class so you are clear what is due and when. If you are absent be sure to check this online schedule to see what is coming up, what the homework is, etc.

Note: Monday, Aug. 29 is the drop/add deadline date. It's the last day of 100 percent refund for full semester courses. Friday, Oct. 21 is last day to withdraw with a "W" mark.

Week 1—August 24

- Course introduction; syllabus; student info sheets
- Friday—Preview Chapter 1, "Getting Organized for Writing"
- **Homework for Monday, Aug. 29:**
 - Read Chapter 1, "Getting Organized for Writing"
 - Complete Skill Building Activity Nos. 4 and 5 on p. 32 (all such papers should be typed and double-spaced)

Week 2— August 29

- Monday- review and collect Chapter 1 homework
- Discuss Student Profile article/release (pattern after Student Profiles on the [C of C homepage](#)). On Friday, you will be matched with a student during class and given time to talk to each other and to exchange phone/email.
- Wednesday: Look at feature and profile articles
- Discuss Student Profile I assignment
- Friday- Class time for student-to-student interviews
- **Homework for Monday, Sept. 5:** Each student writes a 250-plus word article with quotes about another student in this class.
 - Scenario is that this is running as part of CofC printed and online material for prospective students and their parents
 - Use CofC's Student Profile as a template (see school's homepage) or something similar to give article a professional "camera ready" look
 - Article should have at least three direct quotes from your student
 - Include a photograph of your student also in your layout- coordinate this with your student
 - Keep tone of story positive and upbeat
 - Keep paragraphs short
 - For layout, use [this template](#):
 - It's OK to have your student review piece before it's "published"
 - Can review Ch. 7 in book on Feature articles/releases

Week 3— September 5

- **Monday: Student Profile releases due—discuss, peer review, collect**
- This article will be returned to you Wednesday- you are to revise it and turn in again Friday for a letter grade
- Wednesday: Review News Release formatting
- Preview and outline the SGA Adopt-A-Street news release
- **Homework for Friday, Sept. 9:** Type/write/format SGA Adopt-A-Street news release (follow proper News Release format; see writing tips, p. 135)- include a quote from an SGA official and/or neighborhood leader
- **Also due Friday:** Revised student feature article (turn in original with it)

- **Friday**—Peer review Adopt-A-Street release and preview Chapter 2, “Becoming a Persuasive Writer”
- **Homework for Monday, Sept. 12:**
 - Read Chapter 2, “Becoming a Persuasive Writer”
 - Complete Skill Building Activity 5 and one of the other ones on p. 59 (except for No.1—don’t do this one)
 - Put response(s) on separate pages and in the form of a professional memo or proposal with company letterhead (can be from your own PR firm)
 - No. 5 should be on university letterhead and directed to the university relations director who has asked you to write this news release

Week 4—September 12

- **This week:** Continue Chapter 2, “Becoming a Persuasive Writer” and then Chapter 3, “Avoiding Legal Hassles”
- **Return Adopt-A-Street releases**
- **Go over Chapter 2 homework (groups maybe)**
- **Homework for Wednesday, Sept. 14**
 - Also, do Chapter 2, Skill Building Activity 1 on p. 59. Review pages 48-53 and create a proposal for the College of Charleston’s president George Benson on how these persuasion tactics/techniques can be used to the make his case to the legislature and taxpaying public to not make any budget cuts. Put on CofC letterhead—you are the school’s director of communications and governmental affairs
- **Wednesday:** Discuss homework due today; examine recent CofC president’s op-ed pieces about construction and tuition
- **Homework for Friday, Sept. 16: Revise your Adopt-A-Street release- turn in new copy with first one attached in back**
- **Review the Public Relations Society of America’s Code of Ethics (posted)**
- **Friday:** Chapter 3 Powerpoint, “Avoiding Legal Hassles”
- **Homework for Monday, Sept. 19:**
 - Read Chapter 3, “Avoiding Legal Hassles”
 - Complete one of the three Skill Building Activities, p. 89-90
 - Put paper in form of a professional memo or proposal with company letterhead: Rosanna’s Coffee Shops for No.1 and a company of your choosing for Nos. 2 and 3. Be sure to bring concepts from the chapter into your response.

Week 5-- September 19

- **Monday:** review and collect Chapter 3 homework due today
- **Wednesday:** Guest speaker to talk about PR legal and ethical issues and concerns: Mike Robertson, CofC’s Senior Director of Media Relations with the college’s Division of Marketing and Communications
- **Homework for Friday, Sept. 23:** Write a one page news release about Mike Robertson’s visit to our class. Put on CofC Department of

Communication letterhead. Follow news release format guidelines. Focus on his advice to students wishing to enter the PR and marketing fields. Also include what he says about handling sensitive/delicate/controversial media inquiries. Include at least three direct quotes from Robertson. Follow AP writing style.

- **Friday: Peer review Mike Robertson articles. Preview Chapter 4, “Finding and Making News”**
- **Homework for Monday, Sept. 26:**
 - Read Chapter 4, “Finding and Making News”
 - From the Skill Building Activities on p. 117, do one of the first five.
 - Put your coverage generating plan in the form of a professional memo or proposal with company letterhead (should be from your own PR firm)
 - Proposal should be addressed to the PR/marketing executive or owner/president of your client depending on which one you do: Japanese restaurant, vacuum manufacturer, beer company, architectural firm, or laptop manufacturer

Week 6— September 26

- **Monday: Discuss, peer review and collect Chapter 4 proposal due today**
- **Look at more examples of staged events and other coverage attracting successes**
- **Discuss letter grade assignment due Friday related to Chapter 4 “finding and making news theme”**
- **Homework for Friday, Sept. 30: Write a proposal about a news coverage generating event and activity. Put on professional letterhead. Bring in concepts from Chapter 4. This is a letter grade paper.**
- **More Details: For this assignment you can:**
 - Do either of the activities (not both) on page 117, No. 6- women’s soccer team media coverage and attendance at games or binge drinking awareness campus campaign. Whichever you do, have 6-10 ideas. Bring in concepts from Chapter 4. Be sure to review the 32 Ways to Create News for your Organization list on page 106. Bullet points are suggested for your ideas. **Be sure to bring social media into your publicity and promotional mix, i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube (even Groupon if appropriate).**
 - Write a news release about the 3 p.m. communication forum about social media in the Stern Center Ballroom. This must include at least two quotes each from the two main speakers. Put on CofC Department of Communication letterhead.
 - Write an Expert Comment news release based on a CofC professor or staff person who is willing to talk to the media. This person has expertise and insight into something currently

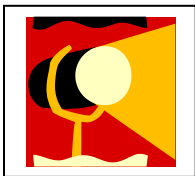
or coming up in the news or is personally involved or affected by an issue or something coming up on campus (such as the Teal Day event this Friday- see CofC website)

- Wednesday: Continue to discuss Ch. 4 and Friday's assignment
- Also do PRSSA ethics quiz
- Friday: PowerPoint: Chapter 5, "Writing the News Release"
- **Homework for Monday, Oct. 3:**
 - Read Ch. 5, "Writing the News Release"
 - Complete Skill Building Activities 1 and 4 on p. 139-140
 - Put news release on separate paper from No. 1 exercise
 - Pick a CofC club or organization from Student Life's listing: <http://studentlife.cofc.edu/clubs-and-organizations/index.php>
 - Be sure to include enough background information on the speaker and boilerplate about the club sponsoring the talk at the end of the release. Do not exceed one page.
 - Create a letterhead for the club/organization putting on the event. Include address, phone number and website or email contact. Use Stern Center as address or Johnson Center (for sports-related groups)

Week 7— October 3

- Monday: Review and collect Chapter 5 homework
- Monday: Chapter 6, "Preparing Fact Sheets, Advisories, Media Kits and Pitches"
- Monday: In-class copy edit for AP Style (handout)
- **Homework for Friday, Oct. 7:**
 - Read Chapter 6, "Preparing Fact Sheets, etc..."
 - Skill Building Activities on p. 161- do the following:
 - No. 2- Write a Bug Exhibit Media Advisory
 - Write a Fact Sheet to accompany your Advisory
 - No. 3- Write one Pitch Letter (not two) to either the newspaper editor or TV assignment editor
 - Review sections in the chapter about these specialized pieces
 - See media advisory example on page 145 and my George W. Bush campus visit alert on our [website](#)
 - For Fact Sheet example, see p. 142 Lizards exhibit
 - For Pitch Letter examples, see p. 153 and pages 156-8
 - Make sure your pitch is also on Zoo letterhead and address it to a specific media person (make up a name if you want)
 - Can localize this assignment to Columbia's Riverbanks Zoo or even the smaller zoo at Charlestowne Landing
- Wednesday:
 - Chapter 7, "Creating News Features and Op-Ed"
 - Discuss Chapter 7 homework- "Cougar Close-Up" article
 - Discuss layout, design, topics

- Wednesday we will randomly select partners and you will interview each other during class (like we did before)
- See Cougar Volunteer Spirit for layout ideas at www.cofc.edu/~volunteerspirit
- **Also, read Chapter 7 and think about how you will do your feature interview on Friday: what will be the questions and angle of your feature piece? Think about the design elements too, and securing a photo over the weekend from your person**
- **Friday: During class you will interview a fellow student for a second CofC student profile—article format is different than first one**
- **Homework for Monday, Oct. 10:**
 - Prepare your “Cougar Close-Up” feature on a fellow student in the class. Include a photo of your student. Design piece in a bullet point style or as a Q&A. Have at least 10 questions. Call the piece “10 Questions” if like that title. Or come up with your own title. Topics should include basic background such as hometown, major, year, post-graduation aspirations (dream job?), plus comments about news of the day
 - NEWS VIEWS—College of Charleston Students Voice Their Opinions (another possible name for this feature)
 - Format this piece differently than the first fellow student feature from weeks ago
 - Arrange to get a good picture or two from your student



Week 8—October 10

- **Monday: “News Views”/“Cougar Close-Up” due today (Ch. 7 homework)**
- View Mitt Romney’s Oct. 7 speech at [The Citadel](http://www.thecitadel.com)
- Go over AP Style/Copy Editing Exercise done a few weeks ago
- Finish Chapter 7 PowerPoint- parts on Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor
- Wednesday: PowerPoint: Chapter 8, “Selecting Publicity and Photos and Graphics”
- **Homework for Friday, Oct. 14:**
 - Read Chapter 8, “Selecting Publicity Photos/Graphics”
 - Do Skill Building Activities Nos. 1 **AND** 2 (p. 206-7)
 - Combine the two lists into a single proposal
 - Do this professionally, listing your ideas on your PR agency letterhead. Address it to a prospective new client who is interested in your agency’s photographic expertise
 - Your wording should demonstrate that your firm has had success in using photographs to attract and enhance media coverage (No. 1 list) and product interest and sales (No. 2 list)
- Friday—review posted Midterm Exam Study Guide (Ch. 1-8)
- Distribute Midterm Exam writing portion

- Discuss Copy Editing part of test which will be done during class next Wednesday (after Fall Break)

Week 9—October 17

- Monday, Oct. 17: Fall Break- no class
- Wednesday, Oct. 19: Midterm Exam writing portion due today
- Also Wednesday copy editing part of exam will be completed during class
- Friday, Oct. 21: Midterm Exam

Week 10—October 24

- Return and review Midterm Exams
- Discuss second half of semester goals and assignments
- Detail Constant Contact Newsletter project; show examples
- Wednesday: Chapter 9, “Writing for Radio and Television”
- Homework for Friday, Oct. 28: (read guidelines below)
 - Read Chapter 9, “Writing for Radio and Television”
 - Complete Activities 2 and 4 on page 248—make these professional looking on appropriate business letterhead
 - For No. 2, Writing an Audio News Release, see format guideline on last page of Chapter 9’s PowerPoint and review pages 212-215
 - Put on letterhead from CofC’s International Education and Programs office
 - For your ANR, make up a soundbite (quote) from Andrew Sobiesuo, CofC’s director of International Education and Programs or from a student who has studied abroad
 - For No. 4, your SMT memo should come from you as the National Coalition of Student Health’s public relations director (or from your own PR agency which is bidding to organize this SMT) and should be addressed to the organization’s Executive Committee. Use appropriate letterhead.
 - Review pages 234-239 on SMTs
 - Keep in mind where your SMT would originate, who your spokesperson would be, what the newsworthy message(s) would be that would make the media want to do your SMT, and how you would promote it to the media nationally
- Friday: Go over ANRs written for today and how to produce them on computer

Week 11—October 31

- Monday: More on Chapter 9, “Writing for Radio and Television”

- Wednesday: Preview Chapter 10, “Distributing News to the Media”
- **Homework for Friday, Nov. 4:**
 - Complete Skill Building Activity 1 on page 271—list at least 10 magazines that reach women ages 18-35. Do this in the form of a memo to a specific sunscreen company from your PR agency or the company itself (this is a portfolio item)
 - Include a brief description with each magazine as to why this would be a good choice for this campaign
 - **Also,** answer Question 2 on page 271-- incorporate this response into your memo for Activity 1 (above)
- Friday: Chapter 11, “Getting Along with Journalists”
- **Homework for Monday, Nov. 7:**
 - Read Chapter 11, “Getting Along with Journalists”
 - Complete Skill Building Activity 2 on page 303. Pay special attention to pages 285-289 in the book on news conferences.
 - Your memo should be addressed to Target’s Vice President of Corporate Communications. Can come from you as a Target corporate communications staffer or from your own PR agency that has been hired to organize this news conference.
 - Target’s corporate headquarters: Minneapolis, Minn.

Week 12—November 7

- Monday: Chapter 12, “Tapping the Web and New Media”
- **Homework for Wednesday, Wednesday, Nov. 9: Read Chapter 12, “Tapping the Web and New Media”**
 - **Complete one of the four Skill Activities on page 349—this is not for your portfolio unless you want to do No. 3**
- **Wednesday: Guest Speaker- Heather Kent, MeadWestvaco marketing communication specialist**
- **Homework for Friday, Nov. 11:**
 - On College of Charleston Department of Communication letterhead write an “Alumni Spotlight” feature about May 2011 communication graduate Heather Kent
 - Put this in news release form with appropriate news release elements (contact info at top, the release date, etc.)
 - The piece should be at least 250 words long and must have at least three direct quotes and other partial and paraphrases from her
 - Focus on how she got her job on MWV and what she does there. Focus also on her background and what she did before and during college to prepare herself for the work force
 - We will also have two visitors from the College’s Career Center: Denny Ciganovic, director, and Katie Smith, internship coordinator.

- One or both of them will say a few words at the end of Heather’s talk.
- Your article should have at least one quote from either of them and information about how current communication students can go the Career Center for various help and resources.
- Also mention how the Department of Communication has an internship coordinator (Dr. Kirk Stone) and lots of internship and mentoring opportunities locally and through its advisory council
- **Friday:**
 - Discuss Newsletter Project and posted guidelines
 - Go over Constant Contact newsletter project (guidelines posted)

Week 13—November 14

- **Chapter 13, “Producing Newsletters and Brochures”**
- **Homework Wednesday, Nov. 16:**
 - Read Chapter 13, “Producing Newsletters and Brochures”
 - Complete Skill Activity 1 on page 384 using three C of C publications. Can be cisternyard.com and two others such as CofC’s admissions recruitment pubs and/or pubs by the Marketing and Communications office (College of Charleston alumni/parents mag and/or Portico employee newsletter—go to that office in Robert Scott Small to get copies)
 - Put on your PR agency letterhead as if you are a consultant hired by the college to conduct a communication audit.
 - This is a portfolio item.
 - Consider evaluating each publication based on four factors given: Copy, Layout, Type and Color (from “How to Create Great Publications” on p. 364)
- **Wednesday: Chapter 14, “Writing E-mail, Memos, and Proposals”**
- **Homework for Friday, Nov. 18:**
 - Read Chapter 14, “Writing E-mail, Memos, etc.”
 - Complete Activity 3 on p. 402. This is a Portfolio item so put on store letterhead. You may want to include a discount coupon to accompany your letter. So design one!
- **Homework for Monday, Nov. 21:**
 - Open your own account with Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com)
 - Prepare a typed and detailed description of what your Newsletter will be about. See posted guidelines for what this paper should entail
- **Friday: Guest Speaker: Kristen McMullen, Marketing and Public Relations Director, Pinewood Preparatory School, Summerville, S.C. (tentative)**
 - She will speak on Constant Contact usage in her job

Week 14—November 21 (no classes Wednesday and Friday- Thanksgiving Break)

- **Monday: Chapter 18, “Planning Programs and Campaigns”**
- **Homework for Monday, Nov. 28**
 - **Read Chapter 18, “Planning Programs and Campaigns”**
 - **Do Skill Building Activity 2 on page 501-2**
 - **Put your eight-part Program Plan on StarGate social network site letterhead. You are this new start-up company’s V.P. for Corporate Communications**

Week 15—November 28

- **Monday: Chapter 18 homework due; Chapter 19, “Measuring Success”**
- **Wednesday: Tentative: Kristen McMullen, Marketing and Public Relations Director, Pinewood Preparatory School, Summerville, S.C.**
- **Go over Final Exam Study Guide (posted)- Exam is Wednesday, Dec. 7 at noon**
- **Newsletter Project updates**
- **Friday, Dec. 2: Newsletters are due—hard copy and email to class list and others (including me!)**
- **Final Exam Proposal Writing Part: Do one of these two projects:**
 1. **As part of your final exam you are to do Skill Building Activity 4 on page 402 from Chapter 14, “Writing E-mails, Memos, and Proposals” (worth 10 points on test)**
 - **The proposal should be written to the executive board of the College of Charleston’s Student Government Association**
 - **You are the public relations director of a student organization that wants to sponsor a week-long binge drinking awareness program**
 - **Choose a student organization that would organize such an event and have your proposal on the group’s letterhead**
 - **The formal proposal should include an opening few sentences or a paragraph introducing yourself, the program and what you want the SGA to do.**
 - **Then follow with the 10 sections of a program plan listed on page 398**
 - **Be sure to end the proposal by signing your name**
 - **It’s OK if this goes more than one page**
 2. **Do a content analysis of CofC’s Portico staff/faculty newsletter. Must be from the latest issue. Follow the precise instructions given on page 524, Activity 4 in Chapter 19’s “Measuring Success.” Put on letterhead from your PR agency. Address your report to Mike Haskins, Executive Vice President, Division of Marketing and Communications, College of Charleston**

Note: You can earn three extra credit test points by doing both of these. Indicate which report is for extra credit.

Week 16—Monday, Dec. 5

- All classes end Monday, Dec. 5; exams begin Wednesday, Dec. 7; exams end Wednesday, Dec. 14
- **Monday, Dec. 5: Final Portfolios are due today**—submit this in a professional-looking way, have all materials in a binder with a professional cover
- Final Exam Study Guide review

EXAM DATE: Wednesday, Dec. 7, noon-3 p.m.

- **Final Exam covering Chapters 9-14, 18 and 19 (skip 15-17)**
- **Turn in writing part of exam worth 10 points- see Week 15 description for details of this part of the exam.**

**** Saturday, Dec. 17—Students can view final grades on MyCharleston**

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