

PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING—COMM 335
SPRING 2012 (Term 112)
MWF 3-3:50 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.
PHONE: 953-2212 (downtown office); 224-3112(cell)- OK to text my cell number
FAX (Communication Department): 953-7037
EMAIL: harwoodp@cofc.edu
COURSE WEBSITE: www.harwoodp.people.cofc.edu
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)

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: Friday, Feb. 13 is the last day of Drop/Add for full semester courses

Week 1—January 9

- Course introduction; syllabus; student info sheets
- Wednesday—Preview Chapter 1, “Getting Organized for Writing”
- **Homework for Friday, Jan. 13:**
 - 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)
 - Visit two sites for No. 4 and one for No. 5
 - Recommended sites for No. 4 PR Blogs:
Repmanblog.com, <http://badpitch.blogspot.com/>, <http://mike-manuel.com/>
 - Recommended sites for No. 5 PR Organizations:
<http://www.prsa.org/> and <http://www.iabc.com/>
 - Focus on writing, content, usefulness of information, and the websites’ layout, organization and links
- **Homework for Wednesday, Jan. 18:**
 - Read Chapter 2, “Becoming a Persuasive Writer”
 - Complete Skill Building Activities 3 and 5 on p. 59
 - No. 3 will be on letterhead from your own PR agency- you are seeking new business from a product manufacturer and your pitch is highlighting success you’ve had with both expert endorsers and celebrities endorsing products.
 - No. 5 should be on university letterhead and directed to the university relations director who has asked you to write this news release
 - In both letterheads, include name of the company (your agency for No. 3, our school for No. 5), and the address, phone number and website address for each
 - Format each piece in professional memo style- see posted example

Week 2— January 16

- Monday- No class: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Wednesday-
 - **Chapter 2 homework due**
 - 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.
 - Look at various feature and profile articles
 - Go over Profile I guidelines (see below)
- **Friday- Class time for student-to-student interviews**
- **Homework for Monday, Jan. 23:** 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— January 23

- **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 Wednesday, Jan. 25:** Type/write/format SGA Adopt-A-Street news release (follow proper News Release format; see writing tips, p. 135)
 - Keep release to a single page (double or single spaced)
 - Make sure it has all of the usual news release elements
 - Put on CofC SGA letterhead and put yourself as the contact person
 - Change street names to our downtown street names
 - Include a quote from an SGA official and/or neighborhood leader
 - Say that the winter street sweep will be held Saturday, Feb. 11 (which is a week before Charleston’s big Southeastern Wildlife Exhibition)
 - Conform with Associated Press writing style
- **Homework for Friday, Jan. 27:** Revise student feature article (turn in original with it). This is a letter grade assignment.
- Friday: Continue copy editing and AP Style exercise started last class
- **Homework for Monday, Jan. 30:** Revise your Adopt-A-Street News Release and turn in with first copy. This is a letter grade assignment. Be sure to include all required elements, including a quote from the SGA president and/or a neighborhood leader

Week 4—January 30

- **Monday: Revised Adopt-A-Street releases due**
- This week: Chapter 3, “Avoiding Legal Hassles”
- View Chapter 3 Powerpoint
- Review PRSA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
- **Homework for Wednesday, Feb. 1:**
 - Read Chapter 3, “Avoiding Legal Hassles”
 - Complete Skill Building Activity No. 1, page 89

- Put paper in form of a professional memo to Rosanna’s president. You are the Rosanna company’s corporate communication vice president.
- Outline the concerns for each of the five promotion and marketing ideas.
- Be sure to use concepts from the chapter to bolster your arguments and concerns
- **Wednesday, Feb. 1:** Review Rosanna’s Coffee Shops legal concerns
- **In class Wednesday, be prepared to do Skill Building Activity No. 3 on page 90. Class time will be given to preparing this piece.**
- **Friday, Feb. 3:** Collect “Citizen of the Year” letters; Discuss homework due Monday; examine recent CofC president’s op-ed pieces about construction and tuition
- **Homework for Monday, Feb. 6-** Do Chapter 3, Skill Building Activity 2 on p. 90. Put on company letterhead of your choosing. You are the company’s corporate communications vice president. Write a memo to the company’s president cautioning him against what he has asked you to do, per the description given

Week 5—February 6

- **Monday:** review and collect Chapter 3 homework due today
- **Wednesday:** Guest speaker to talk about the recent Department of Communication Bully Pulpit events: Larissa Allison, Events Coordinator and Director of Alumni Outreach, Department of Communication, College of Charleston. Here’s a link to her bio: <http://communication.cofc.edu/about/faculty-staff-listing/allison-larissa.php>
- **Homework for Friday, Feb. 10:** Write a one-to-two page news release about Larissa Allison’s visit to our class. Put on CofC Department of Communication letterhead. Follow news release format guidelines. Focus on her “behind-the-scenes” stories and anecdotes about the political candidates, staffs and media (and Stephen Colbert!) that came to campus the past few months as part of the Bully Pulpit series. Also touch on her advice to students wishing to enter the PR and event planning fields. Include at least three direct quotes from her. Follow AP writing style.
- **Note:** This is a letter grade assignment!
- **Friday:** Peer review Larissa Allison articles. Preview Chapter 4, “Finding and Making News”
- **Homework for Monday, Feb. 13:**
 - 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

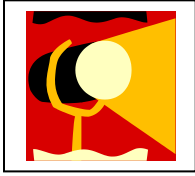
Week 6— February 13

- **Monday: Discuss, peer review and collect Chapter 4 proposal due today. Also return Larissa Allison news releases.**
- **Homework for Wednesday, Feb. 15:**
 - From your Larissa Allison release, create a camera-ready piece using our newsletter template (see homepage to find this)
 - Do this like your Student Profile piece
 - Keep length to a single page
 - Use a photo of Larissa Allison in this and also photos of the candidates and Stephen Colbert if you like
 - This piece doesn't have to read exactly like your news release version
 - On Wednesday, turn in this new piece and your revised/corrected news release about Allison
- **Look at more examples of staged events and other coverage-attracting successes**
- **Wednesday: Review and collect Larissa Allison pieces**
- **Brainstorm ways to increase attendance at and media coverage of the College's new sand (or beach) volleyball team**
- **Homework for Friday, Feb. 17:**
 - Do Activity 6 on page 117 about ways to promote the College's new Sand Volleyball team. The first match is in March at the new pits (courts) in Mount Pleasant at Creekside Tennis Club. Have 6-10 ideas as to how to promote the first game and the entire season. The goal is to attract crowds of students and others to the games and also have ongoing local news/sports coverage. 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 this from the perspective that you are the promotions director with athletics at CofC and you are writing your proposal to Sand Volleyball Coach Jason Kepner
- **Friday: PowerPoint: Chapter 5, "Writing the News Release"**
- **Homework for Monday, Feb. 20:**
 - 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— February 20

- **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 Wednesday, Feb. 22:**
 - 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
Alert/Advisories and Pitch Letters
 - 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, Feb. 27:**
 - 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—February 27

- **Monday: “News Views”/“Cougar Close-Up” due today (Ch. 7 homework)**
- View Mitt Romney’s Oct. 7 speech at [The Citadel](#)
- 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, March 2:**
 - 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- due Monday after Spring Break
- Discuss Copy Editing part of test which will be done during class next Wednesday

Week 9— March 5- Spring Break: No classes this week

*****Midterm grades due from faculty by midnight Sunday, March 11**

Week 10—March 12

- **Monday, March 12: Midterm Exam writing portion due today**
- **Wednesday copy editing part of exam will be completed during class**
- **Friday, March 16: Midterm Exam**

Week 11—March 19

- **Monday: Return Midterm Grades**
- **Discuss second half of semester goals and assignments**
- **Detail Constant Contact Newsletter project; show examples**
- **Monday: Chapter 9, “Writing for Radio and Television”**
- **Homework for Wednesday, March 21:**
 - **Read Chapter 9, “Writing for Radio and Television”**
 - **Complete Activities 4 on page 248—make this professional looking on appropriate business letterhead**
 - **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 schedule your SMT, and how you would promote it to the media nationally**
- **Homework for Friday, March 23:**
 - **Complete Activity 2 on page 248- 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**
- **Friday: Go over ANRs written for today and how to produce them on computer**

Week 12—March 26

- **Monday- Preview Chapter 10, “Distributing News to the Media”**
- **Homework for Wednesday, March 28:**
 - **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)**
- **Wednesday: Chapter 11, “Getting Along with Journalists”**

- **Homework for Friday, March 30:**
 - 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.
- Friday:
 - Discuss Newsletter Project and posted guidelines
 - Go over Constant Contact newsletter project (guidelines posted)

Week 13—April 2

- Monday: Chapter 12, “Tapping the Web and New Media”
- **Homework for Wednesday, April 4: 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- Melissa Whetzel, Director of Media Relations, Division of Marketing and Communications, College of Charleston. She is in charge of, among other things, our school’s use of social media to inform, market and promote**
- **Homework for Friday, April 6:**
 - On College of Charleston letterhead write a Cougar Close-up feature about our guest speaker
 - Do this as a “camera ready” piece using that Word template or one of the Office Publisher newsletter templates
 - The piece should be at least 250 words long and must have at least three direct quotes and other partial quotes and paraphrases from the speaker
 - She has a list of the 2011’s most viewed CofC YouTube videos that you will include in a separate “sidebar” section
- Friday- Peer review Cougar Close-up articles
- **Homework for Monday, April 9:**
 - Prepare a typed and detailed description of what your Newsletter will be about. See posted guidelines for what this paper should entail
 - If you haven’t already done so, open your own account with Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com)
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Week 14—April 9

- **Monday: Chapter 13, “Producing Newsletters and Brochures”**
- **Homework for Wednesday, April 11:**
 - 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: Guest Speaker: Kristen McMullen, Marketing and Public Relations Director, Pinewood Preparatory School, Summerville, S.C.**
 - She will speak on Constant Contact usage in her job
 - And about crisis communications
 - Consider doing a piece about her for your newsletter
- **Friday: Chapter 14, “Writing E-mail, Memos, and Proposals”**
- **Newsletters are due next Friday**
- **Homework for Monday, April 16**
 - 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!

Week 15—April 16

- **Monday: Chapter 18, “Planning Programs and Campaigns”**
- **Prepare class email list for Constant Contact newsletter distribution by Friday**
- **Newsletters are due Friday—be ready to give update**
- **Wednesday: Chapter 19, “Measuring Success” PowerPoint**
- **Portfolio guidelines are posted; portfolios are due Monday, April 23**
- **Go over Final Exam Study Guide (posted)- Exam is Wednesday, May 2 at noon**
 - **Newsletter Project updates**
 - **Friday, April 20: Newsletters are due—hard copy and email to class list and others (including me!)**
 - **Review Final Exam Proposal Writing Part:**
 - From 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 vice president of corporate communications

Week 16—April 23 (Last class)

- **Monday, April 23: Final Portfolios are due today**—submit this in a professional-looking way, all materials in a binder with a professional cover
- Final Exam Study Guide review
- All classes end Monday, April 23; exams begin Wednesday, April 23, end Wednesday, May 2; Final grades due from faculty on Monday, May 7 by noon

EXAM DATE: Wednesday, May 2, 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.**

**** Tuesday, May 8—Students can view final grades on MyCharleston; graduation ceremonies are Saturday, May 12**

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