

# Writing For Public Relations 2310-001

## Spring 2006

Tuesdays and Thursdays

1:30 to 2:45 p.m.

ANSCI 302

Les Roka  
ANSCI 304  
OFFICE: 797-0369  
HOME: (801) 596-7087  
Email: lroka@cc.usu.edu

Office Hours: Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays –3 to 6 p.m., Alternating Wednesdays (beginning January 18) 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. And by appointment.

Despite the tremendous variety of public relations activities available in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the success of public relations still links ultimately to the power and the beauty of the written word. During the next 15 weeks, you will have plenty of opportunity to practice the craft of writing. You also will develop your editing skills as we evaluate critically the work of our peers. This course is a writing-intensive workshop.

### EXPECTATIONS

I plan to treat you as professionals working in public relations. Therefore, you will be expected to submit work of solid quality by the intended deadline. Also, you will be expected to attend class regularly, participate in class discussions, and arrive for class on time. Cellular phones must be turned off or left in silent mode. All standards of professional decorum apply. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to see me in conference.

Regular attendance is mandatory. However, as emergencies and illness do arise which might prevent you from attending class, you will be expected to get in touch with me as promptly as possible. Suitable arrangements can then be made to handle any missed class discussions or assignment deadlines.

### DEADLINES

Assignments must be completed by the indicated deadline. Please plan your term accordingly.

### READINGS

The required texts will be *The Elements of Style by Strunk and White and the most recent edition of The Associated Press Stylebook*. Please bring these to class regularly.

I also will have available various resources on design, Adobe Photoshop, and other materials that might be helpful with various assignments.

## **ASSIGNMENT PREPARATION**

**GENERAL:** All assignments should be typed and free of spelling, grammar, and technical errors. Neatness will be an important attribute. Please include your name and email address on all assignments. Points will be deducted for errors in spelling, grammar, and matters of accuracy and style. Please carefully edit all work before submitting it. Some students have lost one-third or more of the available assignment points because of these errors.

**LENGTH AND WORKLOAD:** You will notice that there are quite a few assignments in this course. Concise and precise presentation matters the most. Do not substitute wordiness or length for quality. If you can articulate the requirements of the assignment in 300 to 400 well-chosen words, I will be satisfied. The key is to gather comprehensive background and your thoughts before committing any words to paper or computer screen. Think critically about each assignment and read the instructions carefully! Some assignments will be geared toward specialized formats. Some projects will be carried out in groups.

Many assignments will require a good bit of enterprise. For virtually every assignment, you will be expected to conduct outside research, using respected and verifiable sources. You also will need to interview people for some assignments. Beware of the convenient temptations available for information gathering on the Internet. If you decide to rely solely on Internet sources for your background information, be prepared to document the validity and reliability of those materials. Despite the enormous advances in online information gathering technology, the academic library remains an unmistakably solid source for information quality. Verify all information! The old adage – “haste makes waste” – should remind you of the best way to approach your work for this course.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY:** As always, you are bound by the highest academic and ethical standards in all of your work. Plagiarism, fabrication, and destruction of library properties or deliberate corruption of online materials are violations of the university code of conduct. Please note the following:

The University expects students and faculty alike to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty (for a complete definition, see University Catalogue, 2000-2002, p. 20, or the Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University, Article V, Section 3). The policy states: “[C]heating, falsification or plagiarism [see definitions in catalogue] can result in warning, grade reduction, probation, suspension, expulsion, payment of damages, withholding of transcripts, withholding of degrees, removal from a class, performance of community service, referral to appropriate counseling” or other penalties as the university judiciary may deem appropriate.

In this department, we have a zero-tolerance policy in this area. Any documented form of academic dishonesty – including plagiarism – may result in an automatic F for the course and a report to the dean of the college. JCOM majors who are found to have engaged in academic dishonesty may be dropped from the major. Students who hand in similar or identical work will receive an F for the assignment, regardless of who copied from whom. If you have any questions about what’s acceptable work under the accepted codes of academic honesty, see The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students, or consult one of the instructors.

## **HOUSEKEEPING NOTES**

**CLASS WORKSHOP:** The workshop comprises a series of writing and design assignments and

occasional class editorial conferences. The course opens with a brief orientation and overview of writing expectations. You will write in almost every class session. All assignments will be graded and returned one week after they have been submitted. You will notice that many assignments will involve two drafts. The first draft will not be graded but will be edited by a peer editor as well as me. You will use the comments from these editing sessions to revise and hone the final draft which will be submitted for a grade. Keep in mind that the deadlines for the rough and final drafts will be firm so plan accordingly.

**PORTFOLIO:** The JCOM department has instituted a new graduation requirement, which will be integrated into the Senior Seminar course. Each student enrolled in that course must present a portfolio of professional quality work produced in course work, lab work and internships (where available) for evaluation by the JCOM faculty. Because of this requirement, every student enrolled in every JCOM course should maintain an on-going collection of the best work done. Then, when the senior seminar portfolio assignment is given, each student will have a collection of material from which to choose. Do not delay; do not think that you will be able to pull this together from stuff you create “later.” Start now; update your own file regularly.

**ADVISING:** In order to insure that all JCOM majors advance through the departmental curriculum in the most efficient way, the Department is now requiring that all students see the department’s peer advisor or a faculty advisor before registering for any course beyond the pre-major. To guarantee that appropriate advising occurs, a hold will be placed on all JCOM transcripts until proof of such advising is presented to the JCOM office.

**THREE AND OUT RULE:** Students can take JCOM classes a maximum of three times; failure to achieve minimum grades will cause students to be dropped from the major.

## **BONUS INCENTIVES**

I will add 20 points to the final grade of those who attend every class. I will add 10 points for those who miss only one session. If you miss three or more class sessions, you will lose 20 points. Excused absences will allow you to make up assignments but cannot count toward the attendance bonus. Some students have been able to raise their grade by virtue of the attendance bonus. A few have lost at least a half-letter grade for excessive absenteeism.

## **GRADING EXPECTATIONS AND GUIDELINES**

The three most essential skills for public relations majors are information gathering, writing, and critical thinking. Therefore, each assignment in this course requires you to demonstrate your mastery of these skills. The precision of language is an absolute must. As you develop your professionalism, you should be careful to edit your work carefully before submitting it. Every submission should be free of errors in spelling, grammar, syntax, diction, and style. Your constant companions for every assignment should include a respectable dictionary or thesaurus and the AP style guide. You also may want to refer to Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style*. It remains one of the best concise grammar reference guides around.

Please do not rely solely upon the thoroughness of your word processing program’s grammar and spelling check features. Always give your copy a thorough second reading. Pay close attention to sentence structures. Among the most common errors are sentence fragments.

Also, deadlines will be strictly followed. Excuses will not be accepted for mangled disks, printer

failures, or hard-drive problems. Any professional practitioner in PR will tell you to anticipate computer or technical problems regardless of the assignment or project. Your client has expectations and they should be met promptly. Therefore, get in the habit of doing assignments in a timely manner. Also, make backup copies of all of your work. Computer and technical failures happen to all of us, generally at the most inopportune time.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments	Points	Deadline
Attendance	50	All semester
Elements of Style Quiz	20	Jan. 24
AP Quiz I	20	Jan. 19
AP Quiz II	20	Jan. 26
AP Quiz III	20	Feb. 2
AP Quiz IV	20	Feb. 9
AP Quiz V	20	Feb. 16
Press Release Assignment I	20	Jan. 31
Press Release Assignment II	20	Feb. 7
Press Release Assignment III	20	Feb. 14
Press Release Assignment IV	30	March 2
Business Letter Assignment	20	Feb. 14
Media Pitch Exercise	30	Feb. 28
Position Paper	30	March 28
Advertisement Assignment	30	March 23
PSA Assignment	30	March 28
Brochure Assignment	30	April 6
Prospectus Letter Assignment	30	April 18
Speech Assignment	40	April 25 & 27
Newsletter Assignment	50	May 2
Portfolio	50	May 2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>600</b>	

## GRADE POLICY

A	551 – 600	C	431 – 460
A-	540 – 550	C-	420 – 430
B+	521 – 539	D+	401 – 419
B	491 – 520	D	371 – 400
B-	480 – 490	D-	360 – 370
C+	461 – 479	F	359 and Below

## CALENDAR -- Subject to Change

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Tues., Jan. 10</b>	Introduction and Orientation
	<b>Thurs., Jan. 12</b>	Elegance and Impact with Brevity Sample Writing and Grammar Test

		Biographical Sketches Due
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Tues., Jan. 17</b>	The Elements of Style
	<b>Thurs., Jan. 19</b>	Press Releases Hand out prep sheet for first press release <b>AP Quiz I (A-F, open book)</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Tues., Jan. 24</b>	<b>Press Release Assignment I (in class)</b> <b>The Elements of Style Quiz</b>
	<b>Thurs., Jan. 26</b>	<b>AP Quiz II (G-L, open book)</b> Editorial Workshop Hand out prep sheet for second press release
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Tues., Jan. 31</b>	<b>Final Press Release Assignment I Due</b> <b>Press Release Assignment II (in class)</b>
	<b>Thurs., Feb. 2</b>	<b>AP Quiz III (M-R, open book)</b> Editorial Workshop Hand out prep sheet for third press release
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Tues., Feb. 7</b>	<b>Final Press Release Assignment II Due</b> <b>Press Release Assignment III (in class)</b>
	<b>Thurs., Feb. 9</b>	<b>AP Quiz IV (S-Z, open book)</b> Business Letters Hand out instructions for fourth press release: a university-based assignment requiring interviews and information gathering
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Tues., Feb. 14</b>	<b>Business Letter Assignment (in class)</b> <b>Final Press Release Assignment III Due</b>
	<b>Thurs., Feb. 16</b>	<b>AP Quiz V (cumulative, closed book)</b> Query letters and media pitches
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Tues., Feb. 21</b>	<b>NO CLASS (President's Day Schedule)</b>
	<b>Thurs., Feb. 23</b>	<b>Press Release Assignment IV Due</b> Organize into teams for class projects Institutional and Image Advertisements
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Tues., Feb. 28</b>	<b>Media Pitch Exercise (in class)</b> Position Papers and Research Hand out prep sheet for position paper
	<b>Thurs., March 2</b>	<b>Advertisement Assignment (in class)</b> <b>Final Press Release Assignment IV Due</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Tues., March 7</b>	Public Service Announcements

Hand out prep sheet for PSAs

**Thurs., March 9** Brochures and Newsletters  
**Position Paper Due**

**SPRING BREAK (March 13-17)**

**Week 10** **Tues., March 21** Establish Brochure and Newsletter Guidelines  
Hand out prep sheet for brochures

**Thurs., March 23** **Final Advertisement Assignment Due**  
**Brochure Assignment (in class)**

**Week 11** **Tues., March 28** **PSA Assignment Due**  
**Brochure Assignment (in class)**  
**Final Position Paper Due**

**Thurs., March 30** Letter Prospectus; Hand out prep sheet for  
letter prospectus

**Week 12** **Tues., April 4** Portfolios and Requirements for Portfolios

**Thurs., April 6** **Final Brochure Assignment Due**  
Speeches; Hand out prep sheet for speeches

**Week 13** **Tues., April 11** **Prospectus Letter Assignment Due**  
Work in class on newsletters with conferences

**Week 14** **Thurs., April 13** **NO CLASS – Continue work on newsletters**  
**Tues., April 18** Continue work in class on newsletters  
**Final Prospectus Letter Assignment Due**

**Thurs., April 20** Class Work Day

**Week 15** **Tues., April 25** **Speech Presentations**

**Thurs., April 27** **Speech Presentations**

**Week 16** **Newsletters AND Portfolios due by noon on Tuesday, May 2!**