

# PR WRITING

COM 3375 (04), FALL 2015, 11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Hybrid  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Communication & Media

This course is designed to provide students with the practical writing knowledge and skills required to successfully execute public relations campaigns. Students will learn theories, tactics and techniques commonly used by public relations practitioners in agencies, corporations and nonprofit organizations.

## Professor S. Johnson

Office: Social Sciences Bldg, #5109

Hours: Wednesdays from 9:30 - 10:45 a.m.

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**Course Description:** After completing multiple writing and applied theory assignments, students will have a portfolio and skill set, which will ideally assist each student in acquiring a job or an internship in the field. This course is a combination of lectures and lab exercises where critical thinking and attention to detail are crucial. Since this is a high level, required course, which provides the skills necessary to be a successful PR practitioner, students are expected to act and abide by professional standards. **Credit Hours: 3-0-3**

**Course Catalogue Description:** "Practice in writing public relations applications, including news releases, public service announcements and newsletter articles. Students will create a portfolio of writing samples." Prerequisite: COM 3335

**Course Objectives:** After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Create clear, concise copy on deadline suitable for public relations
- Create professional work using accepted style formats (primarily AP Style)
- Develop skills in grammar, spelling, punctuation and style
- Identify the distribution methods for written public relations materials
- Describe basic concepts of corporate and public relations writing.

### Important Note About D2L Brightspace:

In this course, I will use D2L Brightspace to post assignments, readings and information. Therefore, you should check D2L Brightspace regularly for information.

**If you would like to send me an email, however, please contact me at [sjohn172@kennesaw.edu](mailto:sjohn172@kennesaw.edu). If you miss an update**

because you do not check your KSU email, you are responsible for the consequences.

### Required Texts:

- Wilcox, D. & Reber, B. Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques (7th ed.).
- The Associated Press, The Associated Press Stylebook & Briefing On Media Law (2014).
- Additional required readings will be provided on D2L.

### Optional Texts:

Strunk, W. & White, E.B. (2000). Elements of Style. Allyn & Bacon: Massachusetts.

### Other Required Materials

- Flash drive for saving work
- Notebook or folder for saving class handouts and exercises
- KSU ID card with funds for printing
- **BE PREPARED TO WRITE** at every class meeting, i.e., always bring your AP Stylebook to class.

**Course Requirements:** Writing Assignments: Writing assignments will be evaluated based on how well you execute the particular PR tactic, as well as how well you apply AP style, spelling, punctuation and grammar. You will lose points on your papers for sloppy writing, typographical errors, grammatical mistakes, inaccuracies and poor application of the public relations principles we discuss in class.

Other guidelines for writing assignments:

- Any grammatical, punctuation or AP style error will cost two points per error on any assignment.
- Any spelling or typing error will cost two points per error on any assignment.
- Poor application of the public relations principles that pertain to a particular assignment will cost between two and 10 points depending on the severity of the infraction.
- Any factual error will cost five points per error on any assignment.

- Bottom line – **ALWAYS** proofread your work, use spell check and your AP Stylebook.

### Submitting Assignments Via Brightspace:

\*\*\* Please Note: It is your responsibility to ensure that your document is in the correct Microsoft Word format and can be opened. If you send your assignment in from a mobile device or if I cannot open the file, a late penalty of one letter grade will be automatically assessed to your assignment. If you do not send me a document that I can open on the same day that you are notified there is a problem, then you will receive a further penalty of a zero for that assignment.

**Attendance:** In an effort to prepare you for your first internship or job in public relations, this course requires that you abide by the same professional standards expected in the major public relations firms. This means attendance is important and expected. If you do not attend class it will hurt your grade significantly since many of the writing assignments will be done in class.

**Number of absences:** Attendance is mandatory and essential to your success in this class. Two unexcused absences will result in the loss of a full letter grade for the course. Three unexcused absences will result in a grade of "F" for the course. Excused absences include University-sanctioned obligations or documented family or medical emergency with appropriate supporting documentation (accepted at my discretion and subject to further verification). Each class session is important, so please do not ask for special permission to miss class or makeup work for a non-emergency (job interviews and plane tickets are not considered emergencies).

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## **Kennesaw State Policies**

### *Academic Integrity*

No student shall receive, attempt to receive, knowingly give or attempt to give unauthorized assistance in the preparation of any work required to be submitted for credit (including examinations, laboratory reports, essays, themes, term papers, etc.). Unless specifically authorized, the presence and/or use of electronic devices during an examination, quiz, or other class assignment is considered cheating. Engaging in any behavior which a professor prohibits as academic misconduct in the syllabus or in class discussion is cheating. When direct quotations are used, they should be indicated, and when the ideas, theories, data, figures, graphs, programs, electronic based information or illustrations of someone other than the student are incorporated into a paper or used in a project, they should be duly acknowledged. No student may submit the same, or substantially the same, paper or other assignment for credit in more than one class without the prior permission of the current professor(s). **A student who turns in work that is not his or her own will receive "0" points on the assignment and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.**

*University Policy on Academic Misconduct:* Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the KSU Student Academic Integrity Policy.

### *Disruption of Campus Life*

It is the purpose of the institution to provide a campus environment which encourages academic accomplishment, personal growth, and a spirit of understanding and cooperation. An important part of maintaining such an environment is the commitment to protect the health and safety of every member of the campus community. In order to promote these goals, students should be familiar with and abide by the rules against disruption of campus life.

### *Disorderly Assembly*

No students shall assemble on the campus for the purpose of creating a riot, or destructive or disorderly diversion, or obstructing or disrupting the normal operation of the university, including any teaching, administrative, disciplinary or public service activity, or any other activity authorized to take place on the campus.

### *Disruptive and Dangerous Conduct*

No student shall act in a manner that can reasonably be expected to disturb the academic pursuits of others or infringe upon the privacy, rights, or privileges of others, or the health or safety of him/herself or other persons.

### *Disruptive Speech*

That speech is prohibited which: a) presents an immediate or imminent clear and present danger or b) is disruptive to the academic functioning of the institution.

### *University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:*

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Office of Disabled Student Support Services at [http://www.kennesaw.edu/stu\\_dev/dsss/dsss.html](http://www.kennesaw.edu/stu_dev/dsss/dsss.html). The Office of Disabled Student Support Services will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

*FERPA:* The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records once the student has reached 18 years of age (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). Under that law we cannot release your student ID number, grades, performance evaluations, or any other personal or academic information to anyone but you, unless you provide written permission to do so.

*Global Learning:* Kennesaw State University is a learning-centered institution emphasizing creativity, diversity, global awareness, leadership, ethics, teaching excellence, digital literacy, technological competence, and community engagement. KSU has adopted a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), an educational process that enhances one's competencies for participating productively and responsibly in the diverse, international, intercultural, and interdependent world.

### **School of Communication & Media Policies** *Advising*

Students are encouraged to work with an advisor to plan their course of study.

Declared COM majors with fewer than 60 completed credit hours are advised by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Undergraduate Advising Center (UAC) located in Willingham Hall, Suite 223. New transfer students should also make an appointment at the advising center. Advising appointments can be made by visiting the Center's website: <http://www.kennesaw.edu/hssadvising/home.php>

Once COM majors reach 60 credit hours, they are assigned to a faculty member in COM for advising/mentoring. To find your assigned advisor, check Degree Works or your transcript on Owl Express. Contact your faculty advisor directly to make appointments. To find your faculty advisor's contact information, visit <http://communication.hss.kennesaw.edu/about/faculty-staff/> and click on your advisor's name.

Of course, even after you have surpassed 60 credit hours, you are welcome to continue visiting the UAC for academic planning. For questions regarding graduate school or other post-graduation plans, however, you'll want to visit your faculty advisor.

Understand that, ultimately, advising is a student's responsibility. While faculty advisors are here to assist, course selections are a student's choice. Students are responsible for calculating how their course selections will affect their graduation date. The Registrar Office is the entity that reviews credits for graduation, and the Registrar's response to a student's Petition for Graduation form is the university's official word on graduation status.

### **Intellectual property protection:**

Lectures, presentation slides, exercises and handouts used in this course are the property of Kennesaw State University. Class sessions may not be electronically recorded without permission of Sarah Johnson or any guest lecturers that may speak in this class. Recordings, including class notes, may not be used for commercial purposes without proper attribution.

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You will not be able to make up work that you miss for an unexcused absence. If you do miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what happened in that class. Please do not send me an email asking me to summarize what you missed. Check with a classmate. Just as you would be responsible for keeping yourself informed in a professional setting, I expect you to behave the same way in this class.

**Excused absences:** If you have a valid and unavoidable reason for missing class, you will need to provide me with proper documentation for your absence (such as a doctor’s note, a hospitalization record, a university excuse or an athletic excuse). All documentation must be turned in during the week that you return to class for the excuses to be considered. After review of your request I will determine whether the

excuse will be granted. I will then work with you to establish a deadline for any work you may have missed.

# HOW DOES A HYBRID WORK?

PR 3375: Public Relations Writing is a hybrid course, with the class meeting face to face one day per week and the course taking place online one day per week. The day-to-day schedule outlines the topic for each module.

- Quizzes, course content, and assignments will become visible by 12 a.m. on Saturday of each week. You choose when you access the content within the given time frames. You will have until 11:00 a.m. on the next class meeting date to access the materials and complete any activities.
- Writing assignments will be posted on the Dropbox tab in D2L and should be submitted as a Microsoft word document attachment. See the course schedule and assignments document for assignment due dates and times.
- Face to face meetings will take place on Fridays at 11:00 a.m. in Room 3024 of the Social Sciences Building (#22) and will last until 12:15 p.m. It is imperative that you stay on top of course work so that the activities and expectations don't overwhelm you. If you try to do everything an hour before it's due, it will be difficult for you to be successful in this class. I will try to keep you updated periodically on your progress in the course. Always let me know if you run into difficulties.
- This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

# SO, HOW IS MY GRADE CALCULATED?

## Assignments:

Reading Quizzes (6 quizzes @ 10 points each)	60
AP Quiz	15
Client Letter	15
SWOT Analysis and Backgrounder	50
Client Planning Chart	15
News Release	50
Pitch Letter	50
Fact Sheet	25
Online Strategy Suggestions	25
Feature Release	50
VNR	45
Final Exam	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>500</b>

## Grading Scale:

At the end of the semester, your final grade will be based on a standard grading scale:

- A= 500 - 450 points
- B= 449 - 400 points
- C= 399 - 350 points
- D= 349 - 300 points
- F= 299 points or below

Each student is responsible for keeping track of his or her own performance in class. The point score earned for each assignment will be posted on D2L Brightspace under the “my grades” tab. No student should be surprised by where he or she stands in the course throughout the semester.

## Final Grade Determination:

Grades are based on your individual performance – they are not based on effort, personality, potential or need. No student’s final grade will be increased for any reason other than calculation error. It is the student’s responsibility to earn the desired grade; I am only the “grade keeper” not a grade giver. There are no extra credit assignments in this course. Additionally, there are no make-up assignments in the course.

**GRADES WILL NOT BE ROUNDED UP**

## PR 3375: COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

WK	Date	Content	Chapters in PR Writing Text
1	FRI 8/21	CLASSROOM: Welcome to PR Writing!	
		ONLINE: Module 1 (Getting Organized for Writing; Becoming a Persuasive Writer) Assignment: Complete Graded AP Style Quiz and Reading Quiz #1 prior to class on Friday	Read Ch.'s 1 & 2
2	FRI 8/28	CLASSROOM: Discuss Client Letter	
		ONLINE: Module 2 (Planning Programs and Campaigns and Measuring Success) Assignment: Client Letter Due Before 11:00 a.m. on 9/4	Read Ch's. 18 & 19
3	FRI 9/4	CLASSROOM: Discussion about PR Research and Planning. Go over Backgrounder, SWOT and Bibliography.	
		ONLINE: Assignment: Work on Backgrounder, SWOT and Bibliography	
4	FRI 9/11	CLASSROOM: Workshop: Backgrounder, SWOT and Bibliography	
		ONLINE: Assignment: Backgrounder, SWOT and Bibliography due before 11:00 a.m. on 9/18	
5	FRI 9/18	CLASSROOM: Discussion and Workshop: Planning Chart	
		ONLINE: Work on Planning Chart	
6	FRI 9/25	CLASSROOM: Workshop: Planning Chart is due by the end of class (12:15 p.m.) today.	
		ONLINE: Module 3 (Finding and Making News; Writing for Mass Media) Assignment: Complete Reading Quiz #2 before 10/2 at 11:00 a.m.	Read Ch's. 3 & 5
7	FRI 10/2	CLASSROOM: Discussion and Workshop: News Release	
		ONLINE: Work on News Release	
8	FRI 10/9	CLASSROOM: News Release is due by the end of class (12:15 p.m.) today.	
		ONLINE: Module 4 (Working with Journalists & Bloggers) Assignment: Complete Reading Quiz #3	Read Ch's. 4 & 6
9	FRI 10/16	CLASSROOM: Discussion and Workshop: Pitch Letters	
		ONLINE: Module 5 (Preparing Fact Sheets, Advisories, Media Kits and Pitches) Assignment: Pitch Letter Due Before 11:00 a.m. on 10/23.	Read Ch. 6
10	FRI 10/23	CLASSROOM: Discussion and Workshop: Fact Sheets	

WK	Date	Content	Chapters in PR Writing Text
		ONLINE: Module 6 (Tapping the Web and Digital Media) Assignment: Complete Reading Quiz #4; Fact Sheet Before 11:00 a.m. on 10/30	Read Ch. 12
11	FRI 10/30	CLASSROOM: Discuss and Workshop: Online Strategy Suggestions	
		ONLINE: Module 7 (Creating News Features and Op-Eds; Selecting Publicity Photos and Graphics) Assignment: Complete Reading Quiz #5; Online Strategy Suggestions Due Before 11:00 a.m. on 11/6	Ch's. 7 & 8
12	FRI 11/6	CLASSROOM: Discussion and Workshop: Features	
		ONLINE: Module 8 (Radio, Television and Online Video) Assignment: Complete Reading Quiz #6; Feature Due Before 11:00 a.m. on 11/13	Ch. 9
13	FRI 11/13	CLASSROOM: Discuss and Workshop: Video News Releases	
		ONLINE: Work on VNRs	
14	FRI 11/20	Class Presentations: VNRs	
		ONLINE: Module 9 (Organizing Meetings and Events)	Ch. 17
15	FRI 11/27	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK! NO CLASS TODAY!</b>	
		<b>* Study for Final Exam * Study for Final Exam*</b>	
16	FRI 12/4	FINAL EXAM. Bring a scantron and #2 pencil to class.	