

## Syllabus: J352 Strategic Writing &amp; Media Relations

## VITALS

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| Course No.:   | J352  |
| CRN           | 42308   |
| Term:         | Summer 2018: 6/25 – 8/19/2018   |
| Time & Day:   | 10 AM - 12 PM, Mondays and Wednesdays   |
| Location:     | Allen Hall, Room 302  |
| Texts:        | The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook (2013 or newer). Readings will also be made available in Canvas. Sign up for the New York Times Morning Briefing as it will be critical to course discussion and assignments: <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/series/us-morning-briefing">https://www.nytimes.com/series/us-morning-briefing</a> |
| Instructor:   | Jared Macary  |
| Office        | Allen Hall, Room 312  |
| Office Hours: | 8:30 AM-9:50 AM Mondays and Wednesday (and by appointment)  |
| Email:        | <a href="mailto:jmacary@uoregon.edu">jmacary@uoregon.edu</a>  |
| Note:         | Email responses by instructor: Weekdays within 12-24 hours. Emails received on Saturday/Sunday will be responded to the next business day.  |

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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| Course Purpose:                       | The purpose of this course is to enhance strategic writing – the bedrock of all public relations (PR). Objectives in this course include developing skills in: A) media-writing, B) relationship-building, and C) critical thinking and organization. The goal of this course is to prepare students to become professionals who leverage writing to be strategic.   |
| Course Overview:                      | This course is structured as a writing lab, which means there will be a lot of writing both inside of class and outside. Writing will be for multiple types of media including news organizations, digital and legacy media. Students will learn how to gather information, interpret that information, compose narratives based on that information, and direct it to media channels effectively and ethically. |
| Deliverables:<br>Skills<br>Developed: | News releases, media briefs, pitch emails, features, success stories<br>Students will develop skills in AP style writing, grammar and punctuation, idea organization, time management, strategic and creative thinking, and building critical relationships with journalists.  |
| Note:                                 | There are lot of moving parts in this class, and it is fast-paced. It requires that you manage your workload to stay on schedule. Reference the syllabus regularly. Also, this is an accelerated course – 10 weeks of a regular term squeezed into 7.5 weeks – so you need to work hard and fast.  |

EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. **Quickly produce written materials** directed to journalists required by the public relations profession, using correct style, grammar, usage, punctuation, etc.
2. **Write and think** in a variety of styles and approaches: print, audio, visual, and multimedia.
3. **Gather background material** as necessary to provide journalists with the information they need.
4. **Integrate theory and strategy** into communication tactics to target diverse audiences and media, to effectively advocate a cause, and to meet organizational goals and objectives.
5. **Navigate the minefield that can be media relations**, learning how to work effectively and ethically with traditional and online media and encourage freedom of expression.
6. **Critically evaluate** traditional and online public relations materials directed to the news media.

ESTIMATED STUDENT WORKLOAD

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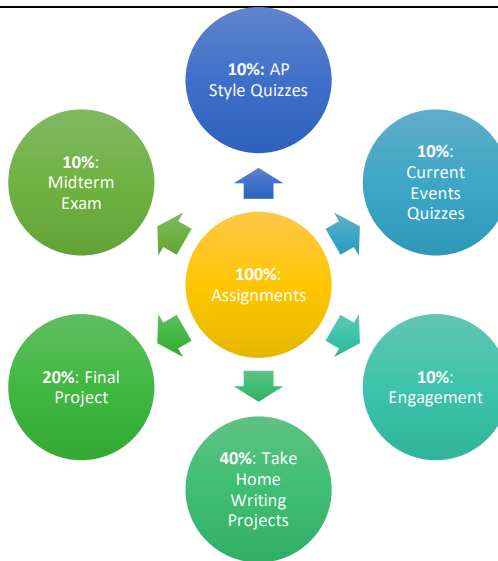
This class includes in-class work and substantial out-of-class work. The following estimates are what you can expect to do per week:

- **Reading: 2-3 hours** (selected readings, research and current events)
- **Writing: 6-8 hours** (depending on the assignment)
- **In Class: 4 hours** (two two-hour class sessions per week)

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

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Overview:



## Details:

- **Four AP Style Quizzes (25 points each):** Four quizzes evaluating your ability to write in AP style. Each quiz will be preceded by reading and writing sessions that will prepare you to write in the format preferred by the Associated Press.
- **Four Current Events Pop Quizzes (25 points each):** Understanding what’s happening in the news is critical, especially to find opportunities and threats that may impact your organization. Prospective employers will expect you to be informed. On four occasions, I will surprise you with a current events quiz to see how well you’ve been following the news. I strongly recommend you subscribe to the New York Times “Morning Briefing,” a free daily email newsletter.
- **Take-home Writing Projects (400 total points):** *Revisions mandatory.*
  - News release 100 points
  - Pitch email 100 points
  - Media brief 100 points
  - Feature story 100 points
- **Midterm Exam (100 points):** This practical midterm exam will test your ability to write PSAs and news releases using AP style.
- **Final Project (200 points):** The final project for this class will have two parts and it will be based on a roll out for a company you work for (more to come on this):
  - 1) Develop a media kit Contents TBD
  - 2) Present a five-minute story pitch Pitches will be made to the rest of the class, who will represent the news media (i.e., reporters). Peers will pepper the PR professional pitching the story with questions.
- **Engagement (100 points):** See “class policies” for specifics about professionalism and class participation. Regarding in-class assignments, we will work on many assignments that will be graded Complete (C) or Not Complete (NC). If you receive NC for an in-class assignment, you can re-work the assignment until it is acceptable for a passing grade. No make-ups are allowed for in-class assignments. *In-class assignments are due by the end of the class in which they’re assigned.*

## Tips for Success:

- **Set up a calendar** (e.g., Google Calendar, iCal, etc.) to map all assignments, their due dates and times, and method of submitting each assignment. A small amount of effort can reduce headaches of what needs to get done by what time and where.
- **Mandatory revisions** where noted. Revisions are critical to your progression as a writer. Put in the work to make your work and skills stronger.
- **Read.** For some people this is work, but it’s A) the way you stay on top of current events, and B) the way to get new ideas into your head. At minimum, scan headlines daily and read a handful of articles. Want to go next level? Read the same story from multiple news outlets to see

differences in storytelling. Think critically about the mechanics of each piece written.

- **Visit:** I am here to help you succeed. You can email me questions, but better is to visit me during my office hours. You’ll notice that my hours are before class and down the hall from the classroom.
- **Work hard, don’t get hung up:** There are lot of assignments. Don’t get discouraged by low scores on the first couple of assignments. Put in more time and effort and keep chugging forward despite any ego bruise.
- **Take revisions seriously:** As a PR professional, you’ll be writing every day. You will be revising your work continuously as a PR professional.

LEARNING RESOURCES

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- Purdue OWL APA Format: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu>
- New York Times Morning Brief: <https://www.nytimes.com/series/us-morning-briefing>

GRADING CRITERIA

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| Scale & Meaning      | Excellent<br>A+ (97.0 – 100%)<br>A (93.0 – 96.9%)<br>A- (90.0–92.9%)<br>Good:<br>B+ (87.0 – 89.9%)<br>B (83.0 – 86.9%)<br>B- (80.0 – 82.9%)<br>Average:<br>C+ (77.0 – 79.9%)<br>C (73.0 – 76.9%)<br>C- (70.0 – 72.9%)<br>Not at Standards:<br>D+ (67.0 – 69.9%)<br>D (63.0 – 66.9%)<br>D- (60.0–62.9%)<br>Failure:<br>F (< 60%)   | Work that is well-organized, written leanly and clearly.<br>Work is essentially ready for publication. Requires almost no editing. Strategic messages resonate with audiences and, when appropriate, incorporates relevant research<br>Work could be raised to professional quality without extensive editing. It is grammatically correct but may lack polish and organization, or vice versa. Needs revision before publication<br>Work has issues in at least one basic area, like grammar, spelling or weak messaging or strategy. It is an adequate first draft, but needs significant revision before presenting to a supervisor or client.<br>Work is inadequate. Writing contains multiple basic errors and/or is confusing. The work may contain factual errors or show limited use of strategic thinking.<br>Work is not completed in a professional or timely way. It often demonstrates unsatisfactory comprehension, strategic thinking, organization, and/or grammar. |
| Appeals: 24/7 Rule   | If you believe there is a mistake with a grade, take at least 24 hours to review my comments before approaching me to discuss the assignment. You have 7 days to meet with me following the first 24 hours. Any grade appeal must be made in writing prior to a scheduled appoint during the instructor’s office hours. Written grade appeals should include: A) your concern, B) what you’re seeking, and C) why this outcome per your concern should occur. |   |
| Assessing Your Grade | Final grades will be posted in Canvas. Grading for this course is straightforward; you should be able to determine your own grade at any point in the term. You may speak with the instructor at any point in the term about your grade and your progress in the course.  |   |

No Grade Rounding      Grades are not rounded. An 89.99 is a B+.

#### COURSE POLICIES

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My Grading of Your Work:      1) What I'm looking for in terms of **Mechanics**:

- a. AP style errors
- b. Spelling errors
- c. Factual errors (minor or major)
- d. Punctuation and grammatical errors
- e. Excessively long or complicated writing
- f. Organization, format and/or transition issues
- g. Errors specific to quote-formation standards

2) What I'm looking for in terms of **Content**:

- a. Required document format and components (follow templates)
- b. Evidence of research
- c. Appropriate/effective messaging and content
- d. Evident of critical and strategic thinking

Attendance:      This is an accelerated course – 10 weeks of a regular term squeezed into 7.5 weeks. There are no unexcused absences. You are allowed one excused absence. You have 162 hours per week of none class time to do as you wish. When it comes to class time, you need to be here ready to work. If you cannot, I suggest you take this course during the fall, winter or spring.

Assignments:      Readings on Canvas assigned prior to a class are to be completed before the class. In-class assignments are due by the end of the class in which they're assigned. No make-ups are allowed for in-class assignments. Writing assignments due on Canvas are to be uploaded to Canvas by the times they specify. Late work receives a penalty of *one letter grade per day*. The drop in one letter grade starts the minute after the assignment deadline. So, if an assignment is due by 12 PM (noon) and you submit on 12:01 PM, you automatically have a drop one letter grade. Professionals meet deadlines and you can start an assignment any time you like in advance following discussion with me.

Integrity      University of Oregon's rules on academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, reporting false information, etc.) which are listed on the University of Oregon Student Conduct Code is strictly enforced in this course. There is zero tolerance regarding academic dishonesty and every case of suspected cheating and plagiarism will be report to the Office of Student Conduct. Visit <http://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct> for more information.

Plagiarism      Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g., quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes plagiarism, it is a student's obligation to clarify the question

with the instructor before using it in an assignment. There are many good online resources that can help you determine whether you are possibly plagiarizing someone else's work. Here's one source:

<http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>.

- Technology:** Lecture slides will be posted to Canvas. See note about Cell Phones in Tips for Success. No food or drink is allowed in the labs. You can have a beverage bottle with cap or top that can be fastened. Bottles must be kept in a bag or backpack and not on tables, floors or laps. If you need to eat, just step out into the hallway.
- Cell Phones:** We meet for just four hours per week, which gives you 162 hours per week to use your phone. If that's not enough, God help you. If you do need to use your phone, step outside into the hall. You'll have to fill in the gaps for material missed during your call.
- Equity & Inclusion** The University of Oregon affirms and actively promotes the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in education and employment at this institution without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, marital status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or any other extraneous consideration not directly and substantively related to effective performance. As a federal contractor, the University of Oregon is committed to affirmative action in employment as a means of ensuring equality of opportunity. For more information, please visit: <http://aaeo.uoregon.edu/>.
- Accessibility** University of Oregon is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. Please speak with me immediately if there are aspects of the course that result in disability related barriers to your participation. I also encourage you to connect with the Accessibility Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall. The Center's website is <http://aec.uoregon.edu>
- Title IX** The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based bullying and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that help and support are available. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, etc. For more information, visit <https://safe.uoregon.edu/services>. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline to be connected to a confidential counselor