

# Public Relations Writing – Fall 2023

<i>Course Information</i>	JOUR 227: Public Relations Writing
<i>Term</i>	Fall 2023: 9/7/2023 through 12/15/2023
<i>Class Hours</i>	9:45 – 11:15 a.m., Tuesday, Thursday
<i>Class Location</i>	Payne Hall 212
<i>Professor</i>	Dr. Jared Macary [Professor Macary]
<i>Instructor Office Hours</i>	[M/W: 9:30 – 10:30 a.m., 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.] + [T/R: 11:30 – 12:30 p.m.]
<i>Instructor Office Location</i>	Reid Hall 202
<i>Instructor email<sup>1</sup></i>	jmacary@wlu.edu

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## Course Description

### Purpose

- To stimulate reflection, critical thinking, and practice in strategic communication writing.
- To enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities in professional public relations, particularly media relations.

### Overview

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<sup>1</sup> Expected email response time by instructor: Weekdays (M-F): Within 12-24 hours. Weekends: Next business day.

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- Attend and participate in lectures, guest speakers, writing, and collaboration activities.
- Gather and interpret information to write a variety of communication materials -- *termed deliverables* -- including pitch emails, press releases, and a success story.
- Produce deliverables strategically with layered messaging for diverse and targeted audiences, also *termed stakeholders*.
- Employ tactful communication and emotional intelligence when working independently and in groups.
- Revise key deliverables and compile them into a stunning digital writing portfolio that showcases student writing for jobs and internship opportunities.

## Core Skill Development

- To advance strategic thinking, making, and doing through professional writing that is meaningful to both key audiences, intermediaries, and achieves organizational objectives.

## Texts

### Books

#### *Required*

- Eggensperger, J., & Salvator, J. M. (2022). *Strategic public relations writing: Proven Tactics and Techniques*. New York: Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003248330/
  - Available at W&L Bookstore.

#### *Optional & Recommended*

- The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook (2020+).
  - Available at W&L Bookstore.
  - There are electronic versions available to you; however, a print copy may be a more handy and practical reference.
  - Get the most recent year, hence the plus sign (+) next to the publication date above.
- Strunk, W., Jr., & White, E. B. (1999). *The elements of style*. Pearson.
  - Available at W&L Bookstore.
  - There may be electronic versions available to you online; however, a print copy may be a more handy and practical reference.

### Handouts

- *Additional readings will be posted on Canvas.*
- Readings and their due dates are listed in the weekly modules via the dashboard.

## Expected Learning Outcomes

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1. Write strategically to achieve organizational goals and objectives across various *media*, including web and print, and modalities, including text and image-text combinations.
2. Interpret and fulfill organizational requirements by completing time-sensitive deliverables. Write increasingly complex deliverables under deadlines.
3. Learn and apply processual writing skills: preparation, pre-writing, drafting, re-writing and editing.
4. Learn and apply technical writing skills, such as plain language; active voice; grammar, punctuation, and spelling; and Associated Press (AP) style.
5. Learn and reflect on the dynamic between strategic communicators, intermediaries, such as journalists and influencers, and target audiences and stakeholders.
6. Produce a visually appealing, user-friendly, and detailed online writing portfolio to promote strategic writing skills to potential employers.

### Estimated Student Workload

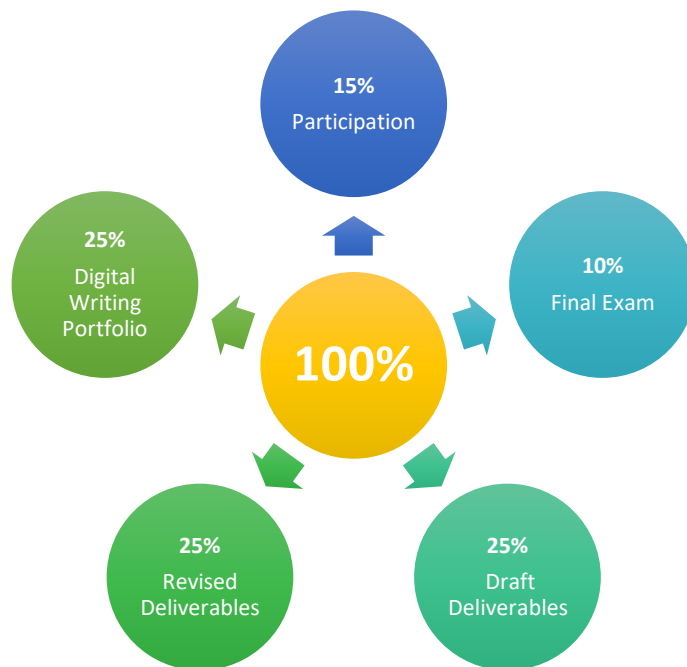
- In this course, you are expected to
  - Attend and participate in all class sessions and activities.
  - Complete all assigned readings, viewings, and listening before class sessions.
  - Complete all assignments and examinations on time.
- Lecture slides will not be uploaded to Canvas. Taking notes is paramount. If you cannot attend a class, coordinate to view the notes of a fellow student.
- Bring a computer and a mobile device to class to write and do research.
- Bring pencils/pens and paper to take notes.
- Assignments completed by students are to be uploaded to Canvas in a Word document format, unless specified otherwise, for grading.
- Assignments emailed to the instructor will not be graded.
- Arrive on time for class sessions and be prepared to stay the entire duration (1 hour and 30 minutes).
- Assignments, including reading, viewing, listening, and writing outside of class will occupy approximately 8-12 hours a week.
- Being organized is critical to success in this course. Take the time early on to get organized to save time later in the course.
- You may speak with the professor at any point about regarding your progress in the course. *Do not wait until the end of the term to raise a question or address a concern.*

### Assignments & Exams (100%)

#### Overview

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- In many respects, this course is a writing lab. You will engage with lectures, guest speakers, readings, and viewings and then put them into practice as a writer.
- You will be confronted with tasks and challenges that reflect professional scenarios and settings. For example, you will be expected to complete a variety of assignments within time and other constraints.
- If you look at the course schedule, you will see that you will learn about a deliverable on a Tuesday, write a draft in less than 48 hours, begin revision of that draft on a Thursday and complete revision by Sunday.
- The professor will provide detailed feedback for revised deliverables. It is your responsibility to ask questions regarding the professor's feedback should you have any.
- Deliverables to be completed include press releases, pitch emails, a media kit, fact sheet, backgrounder, success story, web copy, public service announcement, op-ed, and a media alert. Others may be added and some may be removed at the professor's discretion.
- The following diagram highlights the distribution of assignments, valued in percent, relative to the whole:



### Participation (15%)

- Participation translates into interacting with the professor, guest speakers, and fellow students by contributing verbally and in writing to activities and discussions.
- Participation also includes working well with others interpersonally, such as in small groups assigned or chosen.
- Participation includes completing worksheets and activities to build skills.

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- Through participation, you demonstrate critical thinking, the ability to work with others, and professionalism. Those working in media and communication regularly use their voice to communicate their ideas.

### **Final Exam (10%)**

- *During finals week.*
- The final exam will encapsulate all materials discussed and presented prior to the day of the exam. The exam will be *open* book.
- The exam will focus on the strategizing, drafting, and revising of deliverables. It is designed to flex your attentive, advanced writing skills, such as use of AP style and active voice.
- You will have 3 hours. *The final exam is most critically an exercise in strategic writing within a time constraint.*
- A portion of a class or classes will be dedicated to preparing for the final.

### **Draft Deliverables (25%)**

- Deliverables will be uploaded to Canvas by their deadlines. If not, a zero or incomplete will be earned.
- In one class, you will learn about how to write a type of deliverable, such as press release. You will then have time out of class to write a draft of the deliverable on your own.
- The more attention to detail you give to a draft, the more prepared you will be revise it.
- The professor will provide limited feedback for drafts. It is your responsibility to ask questions about professor feedback should you have any.
- Draft deliverables also include some in-class activities, such as biographies and internal communications, at the end of the term.

### **Revised Deliverables (25%)**

- Revisions are to be uploaded to Canvas by their deadlines. If not, a zero or incomplete will be earned.
- You will revise draft deliverables with the expectation of improving them. Pay attention to detail.
- In most instances, you will be able to further revise deliverables for the digital writing portfolio. Thus, you have ample opportunities to improve in this course.
- The professor will provide specific feedback for revisions. It is your responsibility to ask questions about professor feedback should you have any.

### **Digital Writing Portfolio (DWP) (25%)**

- *You are to submit to Canvas a public-facing URL accessing the final version of your DWP during finals week.*
- *You will present a draft to the professor and your peers at the end of the course during week 12. See the course schedule.*

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- Information about the Digital Writing Portfolio is accessible via the course dashboard.
- Class time will be dedicated to discussing the portfolio, its online presentation, and how to technically construct it.
- The portfolio must be hosted on a web-based platform. I highly suggest Digi[cation] software-as-a-service because we have dedicated on-campus technical support available.
- The portfolio should have an identity and cohesion that reflects something about yourself as the creator. In short, it should brand you as a strategic communication writer to prospective internships and jobs.
- The portfolio will consist of final versions of select revised deliverables. The professor will specify which deliverables from the course will be included in the portfolio.
- It is expected that deliverables revised before week 12 are further revised for inclusion in the DWP.

### Grading Criteria

- Review each assignment’s rubric to know *what* and *how* you’ll be graded.
- No grade rounding requests. If you earn an 89.99, you have earned a B+ per the scale below. I will not accept requests to bump up grades at any point in time.
- All grades may be viewed in Canvas. Grading for this course is straightforward; you should be able to determine your own grade at any point. Remember that if an assignment is “hidden” in Canvas, that means I have not released grades yet, and your final grade has yet to be affected.
- If you want to appeal a grade, follow the instructions in the Course Policy section.

### Grading Scale & Meaning

Excellent	A+ (97.0 – 100%)	Work that is well-organized, written leanly and clearly. All ideas and their expression fully communicated. Messaging targets intended audience(s) well. Requires almost no additional editing.
	A (93.0 – 96.9%)	
	A- (90.0–92.9%)	
Good	B+ (87.0 – 89.9%)	Work could be raised to higher quality without extensive editing. It is grammatically correct but may lack polish and organization, or vice versa. Still needs revision.
	B (83.0 – 86.9%)	
	B- (80.0 – 82.9%)	
Average	C+ (77.0 – 79.9%)	Work has issues in at least one or two basic areas, like grammar, spelling, or weak messaging and strategy. It is an adequate first draft but needs significant revision before presentation to a supervisor or client.
	C (73.0 – 76.9%)	
	C- (70.0 – 72.9%)	
Below Standards	D+ (67.0 – 69.9%)	Work is inadequate. Writing contains multiple basic errors and/or ideas are not fully articulated or confusing. The work may show limited use of strategic and critical thinking.
	D (63.0 – 66.9%)	
	D- (60.0–62.9%)	

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Failure	F (< 60%)	Work is not completed in a professional or timely way. It often demonstrates low strategic and critical thinking and poor attention to organization, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.
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### Course Policies

See the “How to email a professor” under Writing in Writing Resources on Canvas for additional information.

#### Attendance

- You are expected to attend each class session. No unexcused absences permitted.
- An excused absences includes illness. If you are ill and cannot attend, you must email the professor **before** class.
- If you email the professor any time after class has started, you will be marked absent. Notification of an absence before work starts for the day is requisite in professional settings.
- An unexcused absence is reflected in a student’s participation points.
- It is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate if you do not attend a class. The professor will not post slides to Canvas nor re-teach a class session in whole or part.

#### Reading, Viewing, and Listening Assignments

- A date specified for a reading, viewing, or listening assignment is the date by which that assignment must be competed. So, if you are to read a chapter for a Tuesday, that chapter should be read by that Tuesday.
- Readings, viewings and listenings are often short and targeted. So, it is expected that students will consume and be familiar with class prep materials.
- *If it becomes clear that students are not reading, then a pop quiz may be given.*

#### Writing Assignments

- A due date specified for a writing assignment is the date by which that assignment should be competed. So, if you are to submit a paper to Canvas by Tuesday at 11:59 PM, that paper should be completed by that Tuesday at 11:59 PM.
- All written work must be in Microsoft Word format (.doc/.docx), except where noted. Any other formatted file will not be accepted. Also, this allows me to track changes and provide targeted feedback to you.
- Any in-class assignments are to be completed in class the day that they are assigned. No make-ups are allowed for any in-class assignments.

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- *Written assignments must not be emailed to the professor for grading. They will be ignored. If Canvas is closed because you missed a deadline, you must ask the professor to reopen it.*

### Late Writing Assignments

- Technological problems impeding assignment upload by a due date will not be accepted as an excuse for a late assignment. *Be sure to plan ahead, such as ensuring you have reliable internet access before a deadline.*
- Do not email the professor with a written assignments after its due date. All emailed assignments will be ignored. Instead, email the professor asking that Canvas be opened to allow for a late submission. Take note of the following expected email response times by the instructor: Weekdays (M-F): Within 12-24 hours & Weekends: Next business day.
- 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 11:59 PM and you submit at 12:00 AM, you have a drop one letter grade. Plan your work time accordingly. Professionals meet deadlines. Speak with the professor if you have questions.

### Grade Appeal Requests

- If you strongly disagree with a grade and wish to challenge it, you must a) wait 24 hours since you first became aware of your grade, b) review the “How to email a professor” instructions, and c) cogently appeal your grade in an email to the instructor. A cogent appeal uses sound reasoning related to the assignment produced and its assessment. This includes use of evidence to support your appeal request. Statements such as “I think I deserve a better grade” are not sound appeals.
- Be sure to honor the 24 hours before emailing the professor. Students often err on sending emails when they are upset, resulting in confusion and frustration more than a desired outcome.
- Take note that an appeal is a request. A reassessment of an assignment’s grading can result in a grade that is lower, higher, or the same.

### Use of Artificial Intelligence

- As a department, we in Journalism and Mass Communications (JMC) recognize the increased presence of artificial intelligence (AI), fueling debate, excitement, and fear.
- By AI, we mean human thought processes simulated by various computing systems, such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, Claude AI, and more.
- We view AI as a tool with the potential to help people communicate. We also see it as a future job skill. Like any tool, AI has appropriate and inappropriate uses, and, in any job, tools have sensible and honorable applications.
- Unless the professor explicitly authorizes AI for a specific purpose in a course, your use of AI, in any form, is considered a violation the W&L honor system because it constitutes outside academic assistance.



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- Remember: *A key drawback to AI is that it cannot replace critical thinking, ingenuity, and creativity, the skills that you develop and polish at Washington and Lee. Not only can you do those better than AI, but we are confident that when you do use artificial intelligence, you will do so ethically and responsibly.*
- Rest assured, we will continue to prepare you intellectually and professionally for your future.

### Integrity & Plagiarism

- This course upholds the W&L Honor System. All course activities and assignments are pledged, whether you write the pledge or not. To get more information about W&L's Honor System, you can review it in the Student Handbook: <https://my.wlu.edu/student-handbook#honor-system>.
- Academic plagiarism, simply, is using the words or ideas expressed by someone else as your own. All students in this course should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g., quotations, paraphrases, ideas).
- If there is any question about whether an act constitutes plagiarism, it is a student's obligation to clarify their question with the instructor before using something in an assignment. The Executive Committee's plagiarism pamphlet also provides examples: <https://my.wlu.edu/executive-committee/the-honor-system/plagiarism/plagiarism-pamphlet>.
- There are many reasons why people plagiarize, from lacking time to lacking confidence to do work assigned. Regardless, there's no place for plagiarism in this class.

### Classroom Technology Use

- Bring at least two pencils/pens and paper to class to take notes.
- Bring your phone and computer to class as they may be used for specific activities. Otherwise, they are to remain stowed for the duration of class time.
- If you need to use your phone to make a call or send a text, just step outside into the hall. No judgment.
- Please be respectful of the professor and your peers by not sending texts inside the classroom. If the professor observes you using your phone or computer to text, you will be asked to go into the hall until you've completed your messaging. This isn't a punishment. You're just swapping one location for another.
- You are not allowed to audio and/or video record lectures in any way. Doing so is considered a breach of trust. You will be asked to leave the class if you violate this policy.

### Equity & Inclusion

- Along with the university, I affirm and actively promote the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in education 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.

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## Accessibility

- W&L is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. For this reason, W&L makes reasonable academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities.
- All undergraduate accommodations must be approved through the Office of the Dean of the College.
- Students requesting accommodations for this course should present an official accommodation letter to the instructor *within the first two weeks of the term* and schedule a meeting outside of class time to discuss accommodations.
- It is the student's responsibility to present approved materials in a timely fashion to the instructor and to follow up about accommodation arrangements. Accommodations for test-taking should be arranged with the instructor at least a week before the date of the test or exam.

## Title IX

- W&L 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 is available to you. For more information on Title IX at W&L: <https://my.wlu.edu/general-counsel/code-of-policies/discrimination-harassment-and-retaliation/non-discrimination-equal-employment-opportunity-statement/title-ix-at-washington-and-lee-university>.
- W&L has trained staff members 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 about W&L resources: <https://my.wlu.edu/sexual-misconduct-resources>.

## Resources & Tips

### Keep on pushing forward

- You will do a lot of writing in this course. Do not get discouraged by low scores on the first couple of assignments. Put in more time and effort. Keep chugging forward despite any ego bruise.
- And remember, for most deliverables, you get two opportunities to do revisions!

### Reading in this class

- To invest in becoming a better thinker and reader, take notes about what you *do not understand* more than what you do understand. As professor, I do not care what the thing is that you do not understand. Do not judge yourself as stupid. And I will not tolerate

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students judging others for lacking understanding. Reading comprehension is a muscle you develop. Take notes, articulate clearly what you do not understand from a reading, and bring it to class, where we can clarify.

### **Review each assignment's rubric**

- A rubric is a measure of how an assignment will be graded. You can view an assignment's rubric on Canvas in the same place you will upload your file for grading.
- Be sure to review rubrics and ask questions if you have them in advance of developing an assignment.

### **Set up a weekly calendar**

- Create 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.

### **Takes notes for all lectures, readings, and viewings (and review them)**

- Using a pencil/pen and paper, take notes for all lectures. Take notes in any way you like for readings and viewings outside of class.
- Your detailed notes will be helpful to the final exam. Lecture slides will not be uploaded to Canvas. If you cannot attend a class session, coordinate with a fellow student to review their notes. Be sure to reciprocate and not abuse anyone's generosity.

### **Take the revision process seriously.**

- *All good writing is rewriting.* If you hang your hat on complements from previous teachers and family members that you are a good writer, then you might be frustrated in this course. Let go of ego and expectations. Embrace revising what you write.
- Revising what you write is critical to your progression as a critical thinker and writer. In the professional world, someone more senior or a client can suggest or demand revisions without tact. I will be respectful and tactful in my critiques. Thus, I suggest you embrace and learn from them.