

Course Syllabus
Journalism 374 – Written Communication for Public Relations
Fall 2015, Tuesday and Thursday, 4-5:50 p.m.

Instructor

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Prerequisites

Journalism 120 (“C” or better) and Journalism 370

Texts and Supplies

- “Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques” (seventh edition) by Dennis L. Wilcox
- “The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law”
- “PR Daily News Feed” email subscription (free at www.prdaily.com); and/or
- “When Words Collide” by Kessler and McDonald (optional, but strongly recommended as a resource for students who have problems with grammar, style, punctuation, etc.)

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the written communications tools used in public relations, as well as increase your writing proficiency. Students will learn the basics of writing news releases, pitch letters, fact sheets, media alerts and other public relations materials, as well as the development of media lists designed to reach diverse target audiences. Writing for social and online media also will be covered, as will using these platforms to help organizations achieve their objectives. A service-learning project will provide real-world PR experience and materials for student portfolios.

Course Objectives

At the completion of the course, students will:

- understand the strategic function of key written communications tools used in public relations
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the public relations, including media (Associated Press) style
- understand the digital world as it relates to the practice of public relations, including the use of social and online media
- apply current public relations tools and technologies, including Cision; Factiva; Google Insights; Microsoft Word, PowerPoint and Excel; and Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in the U.S. in relation to mass communications

Teaching Philosophy

Journalism 374 is a demanding skills class and an advanced writing course that requires a significant time commitment. You will be expected to write well and understand the rules of good grammar, punctuation and style. You will be assigned public relations tasks taken from professional situations, as if you were an entry-level member of a PR team. Assignments will be varied and numerous, often with a short deadline, because that’s what you’ll encounter as a public relations professional.

Method of Instruction

The text will be supplemented by lectures, class discussions, handouts, guest speakers, videos and in-class exercises. Materials and discussions will be designed to give you a basic understanding of the work that you may be required to perform in a public relations position. Class discussions will relate public relations concepts, strategies and tactics to current events, companies and organizations in the news, business issues, media topics, crisis situations, etc. In order to participate, students must maintain awareness about current events by reading newspapers, watching television newscasts, visiting Internet news sites, etc. The activity portion of the class will be devoted to writing, mini-presentations, quizzes and other hands-on activities. **Bring the “Associated Press Stylebook” to class for writing exercises.**

Attendance & Punctuality

Attendance is essential for success in this class. Students are responsible for all materials presented, assignments due, changes to the syllabus and announcements. If you are unable to attend class when an assignment is due, it should be left in the instructor’s mailbox in the Journalism office before class begins or given to a classmate to submit. There will be no make-ups for missed in-class assignments or quizzes. Students also are expected to arrive to class on time as a sign of courtesy and respect for your instructor and fellow students.

Make-ups for homework assignments may be granted in strict accordance with CSULB policy, which defines excused absences as (1) illness or injury to the student; (2) death, injury or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like; (3) religious reasons; (4) jury duty or government obligation; (5) CSULB-sanctioned or approved activities. These and any other requests for an excused absence must be documented and discussed with the instructor.

Seat in Class, Withdrawals

You may lose your seat in class if you miss the first class meeting without notifying the instructor. You may also be dropped from the course if you attend the first class but not subsequent classes.

According to university policy, you may withdraw from the class from the third to the 12th week for “serious and compelling reasons.” Normally these are defined as anything of import that is beyond your control. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, death or serious illness in your immediate family or a documented change in your work schedule. Poor performance, tardiness and unexcused absences are not considered a serious or compelling reason beyond your control for purposes of withdrawal.

Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability and need accommodation, please provide verification of your disability from Disabled Student Services and schedule a time with me to discuss the accommodations you need. Typical accommodations for this course include extended time for tests, test proctoring, private test rooms, note taking and referral for tutoring.

Classroom Etiquette

Students are expected to behave maturely, be polite in class, respect one another during class discussions and be courteous audiences during presentations. In addition, students are asked to refrain from distractive behavior such as walking in and out of class and chatting with classmates. **Laptop and laboratory computers are to be used for in-class assignments only.** Cell phones should be off or set on silent. Beverages and snacks are not permitted given the laboratory environment.

BeachBoard

A copy of the syllabus, handouts and other course materials will be posted on BeachBoard during the semester, along with quizzes and tests. Grades also will be maintained on BeachBoard so that you can track your status in the class.

Publishing Requirement

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication requires that students in upper-division courses place two articles in publications considered appropriate by the instructor. A story generated as a result of a news release or pitch letter is preferred (turn in a copy of the release or pitch letter and a tear sheet of the article). Articles in local daily and weekly newspapers are acceptable. Students can place articles in the student newspaper as well. One article from a campus publication such as the journalism alumni publication or PRSSA newsletter will be accepted. **An early start is imperative – shoot for at least one article by mid-term.** Articles must be published during the semester.

Service-Learning Requirement

Service learning is an important part of the public relations program at CSULB. Students in advanced public relations courses are required to fulfill a service-learning component that will provide hands-on experience, help them appreciate the meaning of service to the community and provide material for their portfolios. In Journalism 374, a press kit will be developed for a local nonprofit organization or business that is approved by the instructor. The press kit will include items such as:

- News release
- Media alert
- Fact sheet
- Biography
- Backgrounder
- Photo/image & caption

Begin to locate your nonprofit organization now. To find organizations that interest you, you can look on the following websites, or you can Google “nonprofit and [city]” or “nonprofit and [area of interest].”

- [Volunteer Match](#)
- [Great Nonprofits](#)
- [Idealist](#)
- [Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership](#)

The following tips for finding and working successfully with a nonprofit organization have been developed by students before you.

- **Don't give up.** Keep looking.
- **Don't just take the first person who says yes.** Do research on the organization to make sure it has news.
- **When you meet with the organization, get as much information as you can.** Consider recording. They may not provide information on a regular basis, so know the assignments for the semester.
- **Provide assignment schedule.** Give them an idea of what is due and when you'll need information.
- **Brainstorm with client.** You can see what they're thinking so you know what you do is along the lines of what they want.
- **Meet with more than one person.** Ask to have others invited to the meeting.
- **Don't hesitate to follow up but don't be annoying.** Sometimes they forget they're supposed to send you information.
- **Agree together on focus of press kit and goals.** Outline in the beginning
- **Really know what your organization is about.**
- **Make sure organization understands point of press kit...it's an assignment.**
- **Rely on different sources for information.** Organization's website might not be correct.
- **Delicately suggest improvements.** They love their organization the way it is and don't know what they don't know.

- **Keep in touch with organization.** Not just for a particular assignment, but on a regular basis to get information. Suggest a regular call.
- **Show how what you're doing benefits them.** Prove that it works.
- **Attend the organization's events.** You get ideas and see how they work.
- **Remember that it's a nonprofit organization.** Few people are doing all the work, and sometimes they aren't getting paid.
- **Don't be afraid to take the lead.** Smaller organizations are looking for people with new ideas.
- **Email at least two weeks in advance of assignments.** Don't wait for the last minute.
- **Have a third-party reviewer.** Clean up writing and ensure understandable.

Assignments

You will be expected to submit numerous written assignments, as well as a brief mini-presentation. Additionally, you are expected to have completed assigned reading, participate in class and complete assignments as assigned during class. Finally, there will be reading quizzes, a proofreaders' marks quiz, a midterm, a final exam and one comprehensive AP quiz. **You must continue to take the proofreaders' marks quiz until you score 100 percent; however, only your first score will be calculated into your grade.** Unannounced quizzes may be given if students are not staying current on course reading. The nature of and guidelines for assignments will be given to you in class, and in keeping with professional practices, you will receive many assignments verbally. It is important that you listen carefully, take notes and ask questions to ensure that you fully understand the assignments.

Written homework assignments are due at the beginning of the class and may not be submitted via email; however, occasionally you may be instructed to submit assignments through BeachBoard. No late assignments will be accepted. If you are unable to attend class when an assignment is due, it should be left in the instructor's mailbox in the Journalism office before class begins or given to a classmate to submit. Whether completed in class or at home, assignments must be submitted in a professional and organized manner. **All assignments must be typed on a computer unless otherwise specified.** Copy must be clean and error free. Present your assignments in a form and manner you'd be proud to give to your future boss or client. **A writing checklist must be turned in with each assignment.**

Mini-presentations must be given on the day/time assigned; no make-ups will be allowed. If you are scheduled to present, be prepared to start on time by arriving to class early and ensuring your presentation is working. It is expected that you will have practiced your presentation ahead of time and that you use the full allotted time; presentations not using the allotted time (either too short or too long) will result in a reduction in your grade.

Evaluation & Grading Criteria

Grades will be based on points earned from assignments, presentations, quizzes and exams covering lecture materials and reading; **635** points are available:

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|---|------------|
| • Homework Assignments/Presentations/Published Articles | 350 points |
| • Proofreading Quiz/AP Quiz/Midterm/Final/Chapter Quizzes | 200 points |
| • In-Class Assignments/Participation | 85 points |

Since this class is an advanced writing and communications course, you will be expected to write well. Proper grammar, punctuation and spelling are expected on all assignments. **If you don't know grammar and punctuation rules and/or continue to violate the rules of good writing, you will have difficulty with this course.** Assignments will be evaluated on your ability to take direction, your adherence to the fundamentals and mechanics of writing, content, organization, creativity and relevancy to the selected topic.

Each assignment will be evaluated in terms of content and grammar/style, with each worth 50 percent.

One point is typically subtracted for each error. The grading criteria are as follows:

Content

- follows directions
- attention-getting lead
- well-structured/organized paragraphs
- smooth transitions
- easy-to-read writing
- depth of thought
- adequate research
- proper development of content
- proper language usage
- conciseness of writing
- clarity of message
- proper word choice
- flair and style (interesting writing, holds reader's attention)
- accomplishes objective
- talks directly to target audience/public

Grammar/Style

- grammar (parallelism, agreement, active voice, etc.)
- punctuation (proper use of comma, colon, possessives, etc.)
- elimination of typos
- proper format (use of end marks, spacing, dateline, etc.)
- spelling
- AP style

Assignments may also be reviewed for plagiarism using the OriginalityCheck feature on BeachBoard. If you use any deceptive or dishonest method to complete an assignment, as well as take an exam, or if you help someone else to do so, you are guilty of cheating.

Students may be given the opportunity to rewrite certain assignments. If rewrites are offered, they will be due the following class session. No late rewrites will be accepted. In most cases, students will receive the average of the two assignments as their grade.

Though not required, it is strongly recommended that students meet with me after the eighth week of school to review your work. Come to the meeting with your graded assignments, having reviewed corrections and indicated on paper the rule or concept that would correct the error. Be sure to bring your AP Stylebook to the meeting and a grammar book if you have one. If you are interested, please see me early in the semester to schedule a half-hour meeting.

To help students track their progress in the class, grades will be posted on BeachBoard.

Grade expectations are as follows:

- A Outstanding Work (571 – 635 points):** Superior writing that is well-organized and effective, with complete facts and correct grammar and style. Additionally, writing that is concise, easy to read, adheres to media style and follows proper format.
- B Good Work (508 – 570 points):** Writing that is well-organized with complete facts and only minor grammatical and stylistic corrections. This work also follows proper format for the particular assignment.
- C Average Work (444 – 507 points):** Writing meets minimum requirements of complete and correct facts but requires editing to correct organization, grammar and style. Some minor problems in format may need correction, and additional work may be needed to heighten the impact of the piece.
- D Below-Average Work (381 – 443 points):** Writing contains incomplete information, numerous style and grammatical errors, and is poorly organized.
- F Unacceptable Work (380 points and less):** Writing is poorly organized and contains style and grammatical errors, factual mistakes and misspelled proper nouns.

Incompletes are granted only for serious circumstances totally beyond a student's control. Poor class performance isn't an adequate reason for an incomplete. Students must have completed two-thirds of the work with a "C" average.

Red = homework assignment due at beginning of class (printed copy and dropbox)

Blue = quiz or test

Green = in-class assignment

JOUR 374 Schedule of Classes*			
Week	Day	In-Class	Reading/Assignment(s) Due
1	Aug. 25	Course Overview & Syllabus Your Bio (5 pts)	
	Aug. 27	AP Style & Proofreading Grammar, Style & Punctuation Review Review Presentation Requirement Writing Lab (5 pts)	AP Stylebook – Proofreader’s Marks
2	Sept. 1	Preparation for Writing/Research; Email; Public Relations Writing/Persuasion Proofreaders’ Marks Quiz (25 pts)	Ch. 1, 2 and 14 + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts)
	Sept. 3	Review Press Kit & Proofreading Checklist Requirements Writing Lab (5 pts) Proofreaders’ Marks Quiz (if needed)	Presentation 1: Presentation 2:
3	Sept. 8	Finding and Making News	Ch. 3 + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts)
	Sept. 10	Writing Lab (5 pts) Proofreaders’ Marks Quiz (if needed)	AP Quiz (25 pts) Proofreading Checklist (10 pts) Presentation 1: Presentation 2:
4	Sept. 15	Working with Journalists/Bloggers Pitch Letters/Emails	Ch. 4 + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts) Ch. 6 (154-162)
	Sept. 17	Writing Lab (5 pts) CisionPoint Virtual Lab (5 pts)	Service Learning Press Kit Proposal (5 pts) Presentation 1: Presentation 2:
5	Sept. 22	News Releases	Ch. 5 + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts)
	Sept. 24	Writing Lab (5 pts)	Pitch Email (20 pts) Presentation 1: Presentation 2:
6	Sept. 29	Fact Sheets Biographies	Ch. 6 (142-147)
	Oct. 1	News Release #1 Peer Edit (5 pts)	News Release #1 Draft Presentation 1: Presentation 2:
7	Oct. 6	Media Advisories Media Kits	Ch. 6 (146-153) + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts) News Release #1 Final w/ peer edits (20 pts)
	Oct. 8	Midterm Review Writing Lab (5 pts x2)	Fact Sheet (20 pts) Biography (20 pts) Presentation 1: Presentation 2:

8	Oct. 13	Avoiding Legal Hassles	Ch. 11
	Oct. 15	Midterm (50 pts)	
9	Oct. 20	Feature Stories	Ch. 7 (165-182)
	Oct. 22	Writing Lab (5 pts)	Media Advisory (20 pts) Presentation 1: Presentation 2:
10	Oct. 27	OpEds/Letters to the Editor	Ch. 7 (183-188) + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts)
	Oct. 29	Writing Lab (5 pts x2)	Feature Release (20 pts) Presentation 1: Presentation 2:
11	Nov. 3	Photos & Graphics	Ch. 8+ Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts) News Release #2 (20 pts)
	Nov. 5	Writing Lab (5 pts)	OpEd (20 pts) Presentation 1: Presentation 2:
12	Nov. 10	Writing for Radio, Television and Online	Ch. 9 + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts)
	Nov. 12	Writing Lab (5 pts)	Photo Captions (20 pts) Presentation 1: Presentation 2:
13	Nov. 17	Distributing Media Materials Measuring Success	Ch. 10 & 19 + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts) Non-Profit News Release or Advisory (20 pts)
	Nov. 19	Writing Lab (5 pts)	PSAs (20 pts) PR News Presentation (as needed): PR News Presentation (as needed):
14	Nov. 24	Fall Break – Campus Closed	
	Nov. 26		
15	Dec. 1	Writing for the Web, Social Media	Ch. 12 + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts) Media List Progress (5 pts)
	Dec. 3	Writing Lab (5 pts)	Social Media Content Calendar (20 pts)
16	Dec. 8	Newsletters, Brochures and Intranets Speeches and Presentations	Ch. 13 + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts) Ch. 15 + Quiz on Beachboard (5 pts)
17	Dec. 10	Press Kit Presentations Course Wrap-up, Final Exam Prep	Press Kit (50 pts)
	Dec. 15 (Tuesday)	Final Exam, 5-7 p.m. (50 pts)	Two Published Articles (10 pts each)

***Schedule is subject to change.**

JOUR 374 Grade Tracker

Homework Assignments/Presentation/Published Articles (350 total)		
	<i>Points Possible</i>	<i>My Grade</i>
Proofreading Checklist	10	
Press Kit Proposal	5	
Pitch Email/Letter	20	
News Release #1	20	
Fact Sheet	20	
Biography	20	
Media Advisory	20	
Feature Release	20	
News Release #2	20	
Op-Ed	20	
Photo Captions	20	
Nonprofit News Release or Advisory	20	
PSAs	20	
Media List Progress	5	
Social Media Content Calendar	20	
Press Kit	50	
PRDaily.com/PRNewsOnline Presentation	20	
Published Articles (2 x 10 pts each)	20	
Proofreading Quiz/AP Quiz/Midterm/Final/Chapter Quizzes (200)		
Proofreaders' Marks Quiz	25	
AP Quiz	25	
Midterm	50	
Final	50	
Chapter Quizzes (10 x 5 pts each)	50	
In-Class Assignments/Participation (85)		
In-Class Assignments (17 x 5 pts each = 85 possible) <i>At the end of the semester, you may choose two in-class assignment grades to drop from your total. This will be reflected in your "Final Adjusted Grade" on Beachboard.</i>	75	
Participation	10	
Current Events Presentation (Extra Credit)	+10	
Total Points		
A = 571 - 635; B = 508 - 570; C = 444 - 507; D = 381 - 443; F = ☹️	635	

Department Information

Advising: If you are a journalism major or minor, the department recommends that you see one of our advisers at least once a year. We have two experienced advisers – Professor Jennifer Fleming (Jennifer.Fleming@csulb.edu) and Professor Danny Paskin (Danny.Paskin@csulb.edu) – to assist you with your course selection, answer questions about requirements, help you stay focused on your chosen path to graduation, and offer other relevant advice. Their information and advising hours are posted around the department and available in the department office (LA4-106).

Internships: The department recommends that you pursue internships, service-learning experiences, and extra-curricular activities to enhance your career preparedness and marketability when you graduate. Employers will expect to see examples of your work; they prefer applicants with experience. Therefore, you will find all internships and job opportunities that come to the department posted on the department's BeachBoard site. A binder with hard copies of all internships is also kept in the department office for your review. In addition, internship postings are available online through the CSULB Career Development Center. Students pursuing opportunities through our BeachBoard or CDC sites should be aware that the department and CDC do not screen these opportunities for JOUR 498 credit. If you are seeking JOUR 498 credit, you must attend one of the mandatory orientations conducted the semester prior to your enrollment in JOUR 498. Students enrolled in a section of JOUR 498 will also receive advance notice of the orientations from their instructor.

Student Media: The department is home to the *Daily 49er* and *Dig Magazine* and closely tied to *KBeach Radio* and *College Beat TV*. Getting involved in student media will help you hone your skills and give you real-life experiences. Stop by the *Daily 49er* and *Dig Magazine* offices in LA4-201 and talk to the staff. Introduce yourself to the faculty advisers – Professor Barbara Kingsley-Wilson (*Daily 49er*, Barbara.Kingsley-Wilson@csulb.edu), Professor Gary Metzker (*Daily 49er* and *Dig Magazine*, Gary.Metzker@csulb.edu), and Professor John Shrader (*KBeach Radio* and *College Beat TV*, John.Shrader@csulb.edu) – who can answer any questions you may have.

Bateman Case Study Competition: Consider joining the *Bateman Case Study Competition Team*. The *Bateman Competition* (http://prssa.prsa.org/scholarships_competitions/bateman/) is a prestigious inter-collegiate contest, often called the Super Bowl of collegiate public relations competitions. It is one of the most intense and rewarding experiences for our students. Participants on the *Bateman Team* receive JOUR 485 credit. See Professor Joni Ramirez (Joni.Ramirez@csulb.edu), our *Bateman* coach, for more information.

Student Organizations: The department is home to three active student organizations – the *National Association of Hispanic Journalists*, *Public Relations Student Society of America*, and *Society of Professional Journalists*. Each group has its own leaders and sponsors a variety of activities, including esteemed professionals as guest speakers. These three groups also work closely with the department to co-sponsor special events, such as Journalism and Public Relations Day. Get involved and have a blast with your classmates! Contact the respective faculty advisers for more information: Professor Danny Paskin (Danny.Paskin@csulb.edu) for **NAHJ**, Professor Holly Ferris (Holly@Ferriscomm.com) for **PRSSA**, and Professor Chris Karadjov (Chris.Karadjov@csulb.edu) for **SPJ**.

Social Media: Be sure to get connected to the department's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/CSULBJournalism>) and website (<http://www.cla.csulb.edu/departments/journalism/>) for photos and information about department happenings.

Office Hours: Each faculty member holds office hours to help you perform well in your classes, answer any of your questions, and offer advice. Take advantage of office hours and get to know your faculty.

Accreditation: The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at California State University, Long Beach is accredited by the *Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication* (ACEJMC, <https://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/>). Accreditation by ACEJMC is an assurance of quality in professional education in journalism and mass communication. Students in an accredited program can expect to find a challenging curriculum, good facilities, and a competent faculty.

ACEJMC lists 12 **professional values and competencies** that must be part of the education of all journalism, public relations, and mass communication students. Each one of your required courses in the journalism major addresses at least one of the 12 professional competencies. Therefore, graduates who majored in journalism and public relations should be able to do the following:

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in the United States, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communication;
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society;
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work