**COURSE SYLLABUS**

Journalism 374: Written Communication for Public Relations

Spring 2014

**Instructor:** Jolyn Matsumuro

**Office:** LA 4 206F

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays from 11:00 am to noon and by appointment

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**Prerequisites:**

* Journalism 311
* Journalism 370

**Required Texts:**

* “Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques” (seventh edition)

by Dennis L. Wilcox

* “The Associated Press Stylebook”

**Recommended Text:**

* “When Worlds Collide” by Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald

**Course Description:**

This course will introduce students to the written communication tools used in public relations, develop skills for effective communication, and increase writing proficiency. Students will learn the basic structure and identify persuasive content for writing news releases, pitch letters, fact sheets, media alerts, Op-Ed pieces 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. A semester long service-learning project will provide real-world public relations experience and materials for student portfolios.

**Course Learning Objectives and Intended Outcomes:**

By the conclusion of the course, students will:

1. understand the strategic function of and be able to produce effective key written communications tools used in public relations.
2. understand the complexities and importance of addressing issues of diversity in public relations communication, including an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in the United States in relation to mass communications.
3. understand the use of social and online media as it relates to the practice of public relations.
4. demonstrate the ability to write correctly and clearly in forms and styles (including Associated Press style) appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
5. understand relevant technology and social media platforms, including Cision, Google Docs, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Facebook, and Twitter.
6. understand the ethics, responsibilities and professional values of written communication in public relations.

**Method of Instruction:**

The text will be supplemented by lectures, class discussions, real-life examples, guest speakers, videos and in-class exercises. Materials and discussions will be designed to provide a basic understanding of the work that 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.**

**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. Public relations tasks will be taken from professional situations and students will execute them as if they are representatives of the situation. Assignments will be varied and deadlines are expected to be met.

**Attendance:**

**Attendance is essential for success in this class.** Students are responsible for all materials presented, assignments due, changes to the syllabus and announcements. 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.

**Classroom Etiquette:**

In order to have effective and productive discourse, students are required to come prepared to discuss the day’s topic by reading the textbook assignment and meeting all assignment deadlines by the start of class. Distractions such as cell phones and laptop computers will be turned off and put out of sight and earshot for the duration of the class. Due to the lab setting of this course, drinks and food are not permitted.

**Issues of Diversity:**

Because public relations practitioners must understand the individual needs and characteristics of all groups they are communicating with, issues concerning the emerging majorities, gender, and other special publics will be discussed in direct relation to course subject matter throughout the semester. Students are also encouraged to raise such issues independently because of the importance they play in the practice of public relations and the globalization of society. Special attention will be paid to the unique communications techniques that are developed to meet the needs of diverse populations.

**Adds:**

If seats become available, students can only add using MyCSULB by following the instructions outlined in the CSULB Schedule of Classes. Seats would only become available if a student decides to drop this course. Students who attend all classes will be permitted to add if a seat becomes available online. If several students have attended all the classes and wish to add, the student with the most units toward graduation will be given priority to stay in the class. Check the “Registration and Adjustments” section of the Schedule for more details.

**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, as are major websites with substantial traffic (please see instructor for approval before pitching/placing). 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. 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. All elements in the press kit will be evaluated by the instructor before submitting to the client for feedback and approval. The press kit will include items such as:

* News release
* Media alert
* Fact sheet
* Bios
* Social media component
* 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](http://www.volunteermatch.org/)
* [Great Nonprofits](http://greatnonprofits.org/city/Long%20Beach/CA)
* [Idealist](http://www.idealist.org/)
* Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership

**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 AND the AP Style quizzes 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.

Written homework assignments are due at the beginning of the class and may be submitted via e-mail or print. If you are emailing an assignment, it must be received by the start of class. 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 or emailed by the start of class. All assignments must be typed on a computer unless otherwise specified. Copy must be clean and error free.

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria:**

Grades will be based on points earned from assignments, quizzes and exams covering lecture materials and reading; 600 points are available:

* Assignments/Presentations/Published Articles 440 points
* Proofreading Quiz/AP Quiz/Midterm/Final/Chapter Quizzes 150 points
* Class Participation 10 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. 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 **BOTH** 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 paragraphs, organized properly
* 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

At the first part of the semester, you will be asked to rewrite assignments once I’ve returned them to you. Students will receive the average of the two assignments as their grade.

To help students track their progress in the class, grades will be posted on BeachBoard.Grades are assessed as follows:

**A Outstanding Work (540 – 600 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 (480 – 539 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 (420 – 479 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 (360 – 419 points):** Writing contains incomplete information, numerous style and grammatical errors, and is poorly organized.

**F Unacceptable Work (359 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.*

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| **Schedule of Classes\*** | | | |
| **Week** | **Day** | **Topic(s)** | **Reading / Assignment(s) Due** |
| 1 | Aug 24 | Course Overview & Syllabus  Writing Exercise—Personal Bio |  |
|  | Aug 26 | AP Style & Proofreading  Grammar, Style & Punctuation Review | AP Stylebook – Proofreader’s Marks |
| 2 | Aug 31 | Preparation for Writing / Research  E-mail Communication  Public Relations Writing/Persuasion | Ch. 1, 2 and 14  **Proofreaders’ Marks Quiz (25 pts)** |
| Sept 2 | Writing Lab  Finding and Making News | **AP Quiz (25 pts)**  **Pitch Email/Letter (10 pts)**  Ch. 3 |
| 3 | **Sept 7** | NO CLASS – LABOR DAY |  |
| Sept 9 | Writing Lab | **Proofreaders’ Marks, AP Quiz (if needed)**  **News Analysis (10 pts)**  PR News Presentation (20 pts):  PR News Presentation: |
| 4 | Sept 14 | Working with Journalists/Bloggers  Pitch Letters/Emails | Ch. 4  Ch. 6 (154-162) |
| Sept 16 | Writing Lab | **Proofreaders’ Marks Quiz, AP (if needed)**  **Service Learning Press Kit Proposal (5 pts)**  **\*MUST HAVE YOUR NON-PROFIT SECURED BY THIS DATE**  PR News Presentation:  PR News Presentation: |
| 5 | Sept 21 | News Releases | Ch. 5 |
| Sept 23 | Writing Lab | **Proofreaders’ Marks, AP Quiz (if needed)**  **Press Release Analysis (10 pts) – due at start of class**  **Press Release #1 (25 pts)**  PR News Presentation:  PR News Presentation: |
| 6 | Sept 28 | Fact Sheets  Biographies | Ch. 6 (142-147) |
| Sept 30 | Writing Lab | **Bio Analysis (10 pts) – due at start of class**  **Press Release #2 (25 pts)**  PR News Presentation:  PR News Presentation: |
| 7 | Oct 5 | Media Advisories  Media Kits | Ch. 6 (146-153) |
| Oct 7 | Midterm Review  Writing Lab | **Fact Sheet (25 pts)**  **Biography (25 pts)** \*more on next page  PR News Presentation:  PR News Presentation: |
| 8 | Oct 12 | Avoiding Legal Hassles | Ch. 11 |
| Oct 14 | **Midterm (50 pts)** | **Midterm (50 pts)** |
| 9 | Oct 19 | Feature Stories | Ch. 7 (165-182) |
| Oct 21 | Writing Lab | **Media Advisory (15pts)**  PR News Presentation:  PR News Presentation: |
| 10 | Oct 26 | OpEds/Letters to the Editor | Ch. 7 (183-188) |
| Oct 28 | Writing Lab | **OpEd Analysis (10 pts) – due at start of class**  **Feature Release (25 pts)**  PR News Presentation:  PR News Presentation: |
|  | Nov 2 | Photos & Graphics  Writing Lab | Ch. 8  **Press Release #3 (25 pts) – due at start of class** |
| Nov 4 | Writing Lab | **OpEd (25 pts)**  PR News Presentation:  PR News Presentation: |
| 11 | Nov 9 | Writing for Radio, Television and Online | Ch. 9 |
| **Nov 11** | NO CLASS – VETERAN’S DAY |  |
| 12 | Nov 16 | Distributing Media Materials  Measuring Success | Ch. 10 & 19  **Press Release #4 (25 pts) – due at start of class**  **LAB: PSAs/Video Post (25 pts)** |
| Nov 18 | Writing Lab | **News Analysis #2 (10 pts) – due at start of class**  **Photo Captions (15 pts)**  PR News Presentation:  PR News Presentation: |
| 13 | Nov 23 | NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK |  |
| Nov 25 | NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK |  |
| 14 | Nov 30 | Writing for the Web, Social Media | Ch. 12 |
| Dec 2 | Writing Lab | **Web Content Analysis (10 pts) – due at start of class**  **Media List Draft (15 pts)**  PR News Presentation:  PR News Presentation: |
| 15 | Dec 7 | Backgrounders, Position Papers, Reports, Proposals, Newsletters, and Other Written Materials (White Papers) | Ch. 13, 14, 15 |
| Dec 9 | Service Learning Press Kits Due  Course Wrap-up, Final Exam Prep | **Social Media Content, Calendar (25 pts) – due at start of class**  **Press Kit (50 pts) – due at start of class** |
| 16 | Dec 11 | **Final Exam (50 pts) – 12:30-2:30 p.m.** | **Published Articles (5 pts each) – due at start of class**  **Final Exam (50 pts)** |

**\*Schedule is subject to change.**

**Department of Journalism & Mass Communications**

**Additional Student Learning Assessment**

The national accrediting agency for journalism education has established a requirement that all accredited journalism schools assess student mastery of 12 core values and competencies that any graduate of a journalism and mass communication program should possess. According to the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), all graduates, irrespective of their particular specialization, should be able to:

1. Understand and apply principles of law of freedom of speech and press for the United States, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of expression around the world – including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in the United States in relation to mass communications
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
5. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
6. Work ethically in the pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
7. Think critically, creatively and independently.
8. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professionals in which they work.
9. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
10. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
11. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
12. Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

**Addendum to Course Syllabus: Department of Journalism**

**Policies on Grading, Conduct of Classes, Drops, Absences and Cheating**

**Grading:** The grading policies and practices in this class are explained elsewhere in the syllabus. It is the student’s responsibility to read them and to seek clarification if necessary. The student should be fully aware of what is required for success in the course, such as group participation, writing, speaking, completing assigned readings, etc.

**Seat in Class:** An enrolled student may lose his/her seat in class if he/she misses the first class meeting without notifying the instructor. At the instructor’s discretion, a student who attends the first class but not subsequent classes may also be dropped from the course.

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

**Absences from Class:** Grades in a course may be adversely affected by absences, and students should seek clarification from the instructor regarding the course absence policy. Make-ups usually are 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 [2002-03 Catalog, p. 75]. *These and any other requests for an excused absence must be documented.*

**CSULB Cheating/Plagiarism/Fabrication Policy:** CSULB takes issues of academic dishonesty very seriously. If you use any deceptive or dishonest method to complete an assignment, take an exam, or gain credit in a course in any other way, or if you help someone else to do so, you are guilty of cheating. If you use someone else’s ideas or work and represent it as your own without giving credit to the source, you are guilty of plagiarism. This does not apply if the ideas are recognized as common knowledge, or if you can show that you honestly developed the ideas through your own work. Any instructor can show you the correct ways of citing your sources, and you should use quotation marks, footnotes or endnotes and bibliographic references to give credit to your sources according to the format recommended by your instructor.

**Responses, Penalties and Student Rights:** Students should consult the appropriate sections of the Catalog for examples of cheating, fabrication and plagiarism, and instructor and/or CSULB response options in such circumstances. The Catalog also outlines student rights. Any instance of academic dishonesty may result in your immediate expulsion from the class with a grade of “F” and/or other sanctions, as the instructor deems appropriate.

**Accommodation of Students With Disabilities in Journalism Courses**

Students with disabilities who need assistant or accommodation to participate in or benefit from university programs, services, and/or activities should inform the instructor and then contact Disabled Student Services. Students needing support services or accommodations should contact the instructor of the course within the first week of class. In addition, students should establish their eligibility for assistance by contacting the Disabled Student Services Office (Brotman Hall 270) at 562-985-5401.

Students are to provide to the instructor verification of their disability from Disabled Student Services. Typical accommodations available from Disabled Student Services, working with the journalism instructor, includes extended time for tests, test proctoring, private test rooms, note taking, Braille transcriptions, and referral for tutoring.

If the service offered is insufficient or inadequate, the student should confer with the instructor and the director of Disabled Student Services. If these efforts are unsuccessful, students have the option of directing their concerns to the Office of Equity and Diversity (University Student Union 301) at 562-985-8256. Responsibility for oversight and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act has been delegated to the campus director for disability support and accommodation.