Course Syllabus
Journalism 374—Written Communication for Public Relations
Spring, 12-1:50 p.m. Monday and Wednesday

Instructor
Joni Ramirez
Public Relations Consultant
Phone/Text: (323) 532-0746
E-mail: joni.ramirez@edelman.com
Office: SSPA-028

Office Hours
Mondays 1:50-2:50 p.m. or by appointment

Prerequisites
Journalism 311 (“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)
- “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, 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, 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. My philosophy is to assign public relations tasks taken from professional situations, as if you were an entry-level member of my 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. 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
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 may not be used during lectures for note taking or any other activity; however, they are to be used for in-class assignments. 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. Outlines for lectures may be posted. 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
- Bios
- 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 often times 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 e-mail; 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 days/times 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, quizzes and exams covering lecture materials and reading; 600 points are available:

- Homework Assignments/Presentations/Published Articles 350 points
- In-Class Assignments/Participation 50 points
- Proofreading Quiz/AP Quiz/Midterm/Final/Chapter Quizzes 200 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
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. A curve may be used when determining final grades, but grade expectations are 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Reading / Assignment(s) Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan. 22</td>
<td>Course Overview &amp; Syllabus Writing Exercise—Bio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan. 27</td>
<td>AP Style &amp; Proofreading Grammar, Style &amp; Punctuation Review</td>
<td>AP Book – Proofreader’s Marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan. 29</td>
<td>Preparation for Writing / Research E-mail Communication Public Relations Writing/Persuasion Proofreaders’ Marks Quiz (25 pts)</td>
<td>Ch. 1, 2 and 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Feb. 3</td>
<td>Finding and Making News</td>
<td>Ch. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb. 5</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>AP Quiz on BeachBoard (25 pts) Proofreading Checklist (10 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb. 10</td>
<td>Working with Journalists/Bloggers Pitch Letters/Emails</td>
<td>Ch. 4 (154-162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb. 12</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>Service Learning Press Kit Proposal (5 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Feb. 17</td>
<td>News Releases</td>
<td>Ch. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb. 19</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>Pitch Email/Letter (20 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Feb. 24</td>
<td>Fact Sheets Biographies</td>
<td>Ch. 6 (142-147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feb. 26</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>Release #1 (20 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>March 3</td>
<td>Media Advisories Media Kits</td>
<td>Ch. 6 (146-153)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 5</td>
<td>Midterm Review Writing Lab</td>
<td>Fact Sheet (20 pts) Biography (20 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>Avoiding Legal Hassles</td>
<td>Ch. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 12</td>
<td><strong>Midterm (50 pts)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date(s)</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
<td>Chapter(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>March 17</td>
<td>Feature Stories</td>
<td>Ch. 7 (165-182)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>March 19</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>Media Advisory (20 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>March 24</td>
<td>OpEds/Letters to the Editor</td>
<td>Ch. 7 (183-188)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>March 26</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>Feature Release (20 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Photos &amp; Graphics</td>
<td>Ch. 8 Release #2 (20 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>OpEd (20 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Writing for Radio, Television and Online Writing Lab</td>
<td>Ch. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>Photo Captions (20 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>Distributing Media Materials Measuring Success</td>
<td>Ch. 10 &amp; 19 Release #3 (20 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>April 23</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>PSAs (20 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>April 28</td>
<td>Writing for the Web, Social Media</td>
<td>Ch. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>Writing Lab</td>
<td>Media List Draft (5 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Backgrounders, Position Papers, Reports, Proposals, Newsletters and Other Written Materials</td>
<td>Ch. 13, 14, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>Press Kit Presentations Course Wrap-up</td>
<td>Social Media Content Calendar (20 pts) Press Kit (50 pts) PR News Preso: PR News Preso:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>May 16</td>
<td>Final Exam (50 pts) – 12:30-2:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Published Articles (10 pts each)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reference BeachBoard for the most current class schedule and course documents.*
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.
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.

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.