

Department of Communications

PCOM 211: Public Relations Writing

Fall 2004, Tuesdays 6-9 p.m.

Room C234

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Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

PCOM 211 introduces students to the critical analysis and practical skills required to plan, design and write successful public relations materials. Before developing practical skills, the course examines the nature and purpose of public relations activity within social, political, organizational, and commercial contexts. Representative media, audiences, and message types are all considered as students develop critical awareness.

Prerequisite

Any 100-level Professional Communication or English course

Learning outcomes

Students learn to

1. develop research, writing, and editing skills for specific PR materials
2. understand the nature, range, and functions of public relations activity
3. understand how public relations activity fits into an organizational context, to build images, market products or services, or to build consensus
4. understand the strengths and limitations of various media in carrying advertising and publicity
5. identify and assess an organization's public image
6. distinguish between strategies for using print and electronic media

Topics and activities:

1. This class will focus on developing the writing skills necessary for PR practices. Students will learn to write pieces such as news releases, feature stories, public service announcements, brochures, direct mail, and radio and television copy.
2. The course will examine key terms and concepts, with examples taken from PR practices. An overview of internal and external PR activities and influences on an organization's public image follows an analysis of specific organizations' public images.
3. Through written assignments, students will develop understanding and skill in choosing media and types of messages and dealing with reporters.
4. On completion of the class, students will have a portfolio of writing representing various public relations genres.

Texts

Wilcox, Dennis. (2005) *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques*, 5th Ed. New York, Longman.

Journal articles, annual reports, advertising brochures, and other PR materials will be placed on reserve, provided as handouts, or made available electronically.

Evaluation:

Leads	10%
News release package (news release, fact sheet, background, media list)	20%
Magazine feature	10%
PSA	5%
Brochure	15%
TV storyboard	10%
Direct mail letter	10%
Portfolio	20%

Class format:

This class will use combine lecture and a workshop-based formats. While in class students will work on exercises and assignments. On occasion, assignments will be given at the beginning of class and will be due by the end of class. Therefore, it is strongly advised that students make every effort to attend all classes. Students are encouraged to ask questions, make comments and share information based on course materials and on other readings or experiences they have been exposed to.

Grades

All examinations and assignments will be graded on a percentage basis. Final grades will be calculated to letter grades using the following table:

Percent	Grade	Percent	Grade
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AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST . . .

1) LATE ASSIGNMENT PENALTY - Students are required to submit assignments by the end of class on the day they are due. Late assignments will be penalized at 5% per day or partial day. Students not ready to present on their assigned day will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day or partial day as well. And yes, a weekend counts as two days.

2) DEADLINES - Deadlines to submit assignments are not negotiable. If you fail to hand in the exercise or have your presentation ready because of a legitimate medical reason, you must get in touch with your instructor, present your evidence in the form of a medical certificate from your doctor and make arrangements for another deadline.

3) FINAL - The final exam will be rescheduled only under extraordinary circumstances. Students must make a written request to the Dean of Arts. Upon the Dean=s approval, the instructor will be authorized to reschedule the final exam.

4) PLAGARISM - Please note that in academia, plagiarism is at the top of the seven deadly sin list. If you are quoting, paraphrasing or using the ideas gathered from the work of other authors, it must be cited, and cited correctly, otherwise the instructor will assume you are cheating by trying to claim the quote, paraphrase or idea as your own and you will receive an automatic 0 on your

assignment. For more information on plagiarism and other academic offences, see the Okanagan University College calendar, available online at

www.ouc.bc.ca/xprs/PolicyLibrary/Policies/Academic/2-21%20Plagiarism.pdf.