

UN: PUR4100A \_\_\_\_

PW: \_\_\_\_\_

Course: PUR 4100 Section 4071  
**Public Relations Writing**  
Times: Mon. & Wed. 10:40 a.m. - 12:35 p.m.  
Location: Weimer 2056

Instructor: Matt Ragas  
Email: mragas@ufl.edu  
Web: www.matragas.com  
Office: 2039B  
Phone: (407) 963-8763 (cell)  
Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 12:40 p.m. - 1:40 p.m. or by Appt.

*"Publicity is a one-way street; public relations is a two-way street."  
--Edward L. Bernays*

Description:

This course is designed to provide you with an introduction to developing and writing documents for public relations purposes. In this course, you will learn to generate public relations materials in a variety of formats, including backgrounders, fact sheets, bio sketches, news releases, brochures, position papers, public service announcements, speeches and media pitches for a client.

Prerequisites:

In order to enroll in the course, you must have received a grade of C or better in PUR 3000 (Principles of Public Relations) and JOU 3101 (Reporting). Proficiency in word processing is also required. Familiarity with visual design is helpful, but not necessary.

Required Materials:

Newsom, D. & Haynes, D. (2008). *Public Relations Writing: Form & Style* (Eighth Edition). Belmont, CA: Thomas Wadsworth. **Available at UF Bookstore.**

*The Associated Press Stylebook* (a recent edition). New York: Basic Books.  
**Available at UF Bookstore.**

Supplemental readings may be supplied or read online throughout the course.

Please purchase a reliable external USB flash drive to save your work on during the semester. **The hard drives on the lab computers are not dependable.**

### Objectives

After successfully completing this class, students should:

- a. Be competent in writing for an array of public relations purposes. This means producing documents with strong mechanics!
- b. Have developed a professional portfolio for a real-world client.
- c. Have an understanding of how to create public relations documents for strategic communication purposes.

### Strategy

This learner-centered course will primarily use class discussion and hands-on instruction to engage in the learning process. We will use the assigned readings as a springboard for expanded discussion utilizing current real-world examples. My teaching style emphasizes *interactivity* and *collaboration*. Classes will move much like a seminar format that would operate in the professional world. This is an outcomes based course, and you will be evaluated primarily on your ability to transfer the readings and discussions shared in class into workable documents. Much of our class time will involve you working independently with me assisting you on a one-on-one or group basis. Since we are covering a variety of materials, it is vital that you keep up with the reading schedule.

### Grading

Final grades will be based on the following 100-point scale:

- 90-100=A
- 86-89=B+
- 80-85=B
- 76-79=C+
- 70-75=C
- 66-69=D+
- 60-65=D
- 0-59=E

### *Semester Assignments:*

#### *Final Client Communication Plan = 25%*

- More information about the final client communication plan will be distributed soon. Essentially, it will be a portfolio of the various PR documents covered in class that you will create for a client. You will have already created many of these documents with your writing sets.

#### *Writing Assignment Sets = 40%*

- *Two sets* of writing assignments (counting for 20% each) will be turned in that will be used as the basis for your final client plan at the end of the course.

#### *Final Presentation = 10%*

- In addition to submitting the final client communication plan at the end of the semester, you will make a brief presentation to the class (no more than 8 minutes in length). PowerPoint may be utilized, but is not required.

#### *Client Selection Assignment, Cover Letter & Resume Assignment = 10%*

- These two short assignments are due during the first few weeks of class.

#### *Attendance, Class Exercises, Participation = 15%*

- Because this is a learner-centered course, your attendance and participation in class discussions and exercises is essential. You are expected to always arrive for class on time. If you're going to miss class or be late, please contact me beforehand to make other arrangements. Attendance will be taken each class by passing around a sign-in sheet. **Four unexcused absences will be allowed without penalty over the course of the semester.** Excused absences must have a doctor's note. After that, your final grade may be lowered by as much as one letter grade. In class exercises also contribute to this portion of your grade. **IMPORTANT: It is your responsibility to sign-in each class. If your signature isn't on the sheet for that day, then you'll be marked absent.**
- The instructor's role in this course is as the discussion leader, not as the sole discussant. In other words, speak up with thoughts, suggestions, opinions, etc. Remember to respect the views and perspectives of others. **Bringing up current real-world examples of public relations campaigns you've seen (both good and bad) is highly encouraged!** This portion of the grading is subjective, and you can only earn full credit if you attend each class on time

and you consistently contribute to the class. Keeping up with the required reading will make your contributions in this area more meaningful. Your participation efforts should be steady throughout the course.

*Exams = None!*

*Makeup & Late Work*

Generally, makeup assignments cannot be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Late work will be reduced one grade for each 24 hour period it is not turned in. In a professional environment, the consequences for missing deadlines or not following instructions are worse.

*A Word about Mechanics & Fact Errors*

Because this is a technical writing course as much as anything else, strong mechanics are expected. Unless otherwise specified, WE WILL USE AP STYLE ON ALL ASSIGNMENTS. Do not assume you will remember everything from earlier courses. Pull out your stylebooks now and begin reviewing. I do not do this to torture you, but because it is what is required in the profession.

Any paper containing a major factual error will be severely penalized. A major factual error is defined as one which gives the wrong information to the audience, including such things as misspelling the client's name, incorrect identification of key sources, or having the wrong place and time for an upcoming event. Errors which do a minor disservice to the reader, such as incorrect time or place for a past event, will be graded somewhat more leniently, but remember ALL FACTUAL ERRORS WILL BE CONSIDERED SERIOUS.

*A Word about Paraphrasing*

Some of the assignments used in class will be drawn from hypothetical or existing situations. For example, you might be given a fact sheet and then asked to write a news release based on the presented information. In these cases, it is crucial that you DO NOT COPY the text given word-for-word. Instead, you should paraphrase and attribute sources when necessary. In addition, a hypothetical case does not mean you can CREATE QUOTES. Quotes will be provided when needed for assignments. If you have a question, ask!

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism (literary or artistic theft), copying someone else's work or other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any case of academic dishonesty will be

considered grounds for an automatic failing grade in the course. University guidelines will be followed for any offenses.

- Having someone else do your work for you is also considered academic dishonesty.
- When completing any of your writing assignments for this class, it is important to clearly attribute where you obtained your information from, whether it's from a web site or from an organization's internal document.

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

For more information about academic honesty, contact, Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 392-1261.

You can review UF's academic honesty guidelines in detail at: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>

(University of Florida Honor Code, 2005)

### Inclusiveness

Every attempt is made to make all courses non-sexist, diverse and multicultural in content. Should I ever fail to meet this goal, please let me know immediately.

### Students with Special Needs

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

### Final Notes

- The instructor reserves the right to make changes if necessary to the grading system and the schedule for this class.
- While laptop computers are welcome for taking notes during lectures, please do not use them to chat, IM, email, etc. during class. Work days are okay.
- This class is challenging, but in the end it is rewarding and prepares you for the job market. If you notice yourself having trouble, please see me immediately. Also feel free to approach me about any concerns you might have in this class. You have my contact information. Don't hesitate to use it.
- Please turn off your cell phones in class unless they are for emergency purposes. Also, please NO TEXTING during class.
- Again, the following dates and discussion topics are a good faith attempt at providing you with a tentative schedule for the course, but note that they are not etched in stone.

## Tentative Class Schedule

- Week 1: 8/25: Course Overview & Lab Computer Logins  
8/27: The Behavioral Framework: Our Mantra  
*Read pp. 39-63 of Tucker et al. (1997)\**
- Week 2: 9/1: Labor Day - NO CLASS  
9/3: Effective Writing Principles & Resumes/Business Letters  
**Client Selection Assignment Memo Due (at start of class)**
- Week 3: 9/8: Work Day  
9/10: Research & Public Relations Writing  
*Read pp. 57-75 of text*  
**Cover Letter & Resume Assignment Due**
- Week 4: 9/15: Situation Analysis  
9/17: Public Relations Planning  
*Read pp. 76-91 of text*
- Week 5: 9/22: Work Day  
9/24: Building the Case: Bio Sketches & Fact Sheets  
*Read pp. 304-327 of text*
- Week 6: 9/29: Work Day  
10/1: Backgrounders  
*Read pp. 93-98 of text*  
**Writing Set 1 Due**
- Week 7: 10/6: Work Day  
10/8: News Releases; Features  
*Read pp. 174-191, 215-231 of text*
- Week 8: 10/13: Work Day  
10/15: Position Papers & Speeches  
*Read pp. 98-105, 332-345 of text*
- Week 9: 10/20: Work Day  
10/22: Newsletters & Brochures  
*Read pp. 347-380 of text*
- Week 10: 10/27: Work Day  
10/29: PR Ads  
*Read pp. 250-279 of text*

- Week 11: 11/3: Work Day  
11/5: PSAs  
*Refresh pp. 255-256, 265-266 of text*  
**Writing Set 2 Due**
- Week 12: 11/10: Work Day  
11/12: Writing for the Web  
*Read pp. 281-300 of text*
- Week 13: 11/17: Work Day  
11/19: PR 2.0: Blogger Outreach & People-Powered Reviews  
*Readings on this topic will be distributed by email\**
- Week 14: 11/24: Work Day  
11/26: Event Planning  
*Read pp. 196-199, refresh pp. 307-308 & 323-325*
- Week 15: 12/1: Work Day  
12/3: Final Project Specifications/Review
- Week 16: 12/8: **Final Presentations**  
12/10: **Final Presentations (cont'd)**  
**Final Projects Due (NO EXAM!)**

\* Reading provided by the instructor.