

COMM 362: Public Relations Writing I

Catalog description: Prerequisites: Comm 101 and 361, both with a grade of “C” (2.0) or better; junior standing; typing ability. Communications analysis, writing for business, industry and nonprofit organizations. Creating effective forms of public relations communication. 3 units.

COMM 362-52 (21780) is a **100% asynchronous online course** with no in-person meetings.



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Office hours: Wednesdays from 2 – 3:30 p.m. in Fullerton + Thursday from 1 – 2 p.m. at the Irvine campus. As a result of accreditation team visits and numerous on-campus interviews for faculty candidates, my office hours may occasionally need to be cancelled without notice. If you wish to come see me, please contact me via e-mail in advance. Thank you.

This syllabus is a contract between you and me. I will follow the syllabus to eliminate surprises in terms of what’s expected of you in this course. I will adhere to the guidelines of the syllabus to make sure the course is as fair as possible to all students. Please do not ask for special consideration that is contrary to the syllabus; it is unfair for me to give one student an advantage that is not offered to everyone.

The course will be managed through TITANium (CSUF’s online classroom management software, linked on your portal). Please visit the site immediately and, if you feel it’s necessary, take the tutorial to become familiar with the system. You must be attentive to e-mail through your CSUF e-mail address because e-mail directed to this address.

Your continued enrollment in this course constitutes acknowledgement of and agreement to the terms of this syllabus, particularly in regard to course policies, calendar, required textbooks, assignments, online tests, and grading criteria.

You must be willing and able to use TITANium, CSUF e-mail, and related online modes to complete this course. There is NO face-to-face instruction. A team project is required, and this project may necessitate face-to-face meetings with team members.

**Hey!
Read
this.**

Please notify me immediately if you have questions about any of the contents of the syllabus, calendar, or evaluation guide.

Instructor's guiding philosophy

You will find PR writing to be a significant challenge. If you wish to become a proficient writer, you will need to invest time and energy in COMM 362. Begin with the mindset that you will accept and digest everything about the subject that rings true with you, and that you will work diligently to develop your writing skills. Not everything in this class will inspire you. Sometimes, ideas you are presented with or asked to write about may be confusing. Some ideas presented in this class may provoke you. You may disagree with them. That's ok. There is room for disagreement and variance of opinion in public relations. Becoming a good public relations writer is about understanding *all kinds of ideas*, ones we agree with and ones we don't. Then, we use the best ideas to benefit the client and to bring about the greater social good.

In the professional world you will certainly be faced with ideas that are uninspiring or confusing. You will face ideas that you disagree with, or that you find offensive. COMM 362 is a relatively unthreatening place to prepare for this eventuality.

It is my unwavering intention to encourage you to learn through critically evaluating the world in which you live. After all, knowledge is no good unless you can prove its value. I have no doubt in your ability to master the concepts of this class, as long as you are willing to invest the time and energy to do so. **You must also master time management. If you do not, you will struggle.**

I will tell you everything I can about what I know to be true in public relations. You can compare the information I provide you with what you have learned from other sources. I make no claim of having all the answers, or of always having correct answers. Investigate on your own. See what's true. Then make public relations work real for yourself, in your own way.

Professional principles

This course is structured to support the 'Professional Values and Competencies' of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. The course is designed to help you move from "awareness" to "understanding" and then "application" of eleven different concept areas. These include:

- The history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- The First Amendment and the rights and responsibilities it offers us as communicators.
- The appreciation of, and ability to work with, diverse people and cultures in a global society.
- The ethical pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity.
- The critical evaluation of media-generated communication for fairness and accuracy.
- The ability to be a critical thinker who can work independently and as part of a team.

The 'Professional Values and Competencies' align with departmental, concentration, and course learning outcomes. **See the next page →**

Learning Outcomes

Each of the five Communications subject concentrations offers students a different type of preparation for a communications career. All concentrations are similar in that their ultimate goal is to allow the development of graduates who are articulate, intelligent citizens who can think critically and communicate effectively. Learning Outcomes have been established to verify that our graduates are prepared for the realities they will face as communicators in the 21st Century. The COMM Department's learning outcomes document will be posted in TITANium.

The public relations faculty has established learning outcomes common to all sections of COMM 362. Those learning outcomes state that by the end of this course, students will:

- Recognize and apply sound strategic thinking in public relations research, planning and writing.
- Demonstrate an ability to plan and prepare public relations materials for traditional and social media, at a level of professionalism expected of an entry-level practitioner.
- Demonstrate familiarity with the different writing problems that confront a PR practitioner.
- Have a plan for continuous improvement in public relations concept knowledge and writing skills.

As you master these learning outcomes, you will focus on three critical concepts:

- **Public Relations Strategy:** A plan of attack, for a specific outcome based on research-driven expectations
- **Public Relations Tactics:** Specific action steps, taken within a strategy (written, spoken, visual/ graphic)
- **Public Relations Tools:** Communicative elements that are determined by tactics and support chosen strategy

*As described in E. L. Bernays (1952) *The Engineering of Consent**

In this online class, you'll examine how organizations strategize their PR plans, develop tactics, and then create and implement written PR tools to bring about results that are predictable and measurable. You will be presented with a multitude of illustrations of successful and unsuccessful PR practice. You will have opportunities to develop strategic planning and critical thinking skills. You will develop a small team-based project consistent with professional practice. Last but not least, you will have spent a great deal of time writing – and you will see that excellent writing skills are the single most asset of a PR practitioner.

Each subject area of the course (as shown in TITANium) has its own learning outcomes. Follow these outcomes as we move through the material. The outcomes will be your guide as you grow to become a proficient public relations writer and a capable professional.

Required texts

March, C., Guth, D. W., & Short, B. P. (2012). *Strategic writing: Multimedia writing for public relations, advertising and more* (3rd Ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Christian, D., Jacobsen, S., & Minthorn, D. (Eds.) (2012). *The Associated Press stylebook*. New York: The Associated Press.

Public relations faculty recently selected the Marsh/ Guth/ Short book for COMM 362. The book delivers information in a concise, easy-to-understand way. The number of pages you'll need to read is minimal. The assigned readings do not appear in the text in the same order that the information is structured in this class. Therefore, please make sure you follow the page number readings as shown in the course calendar. (The Marsh/ Guth/ Short book is available in electronic format through Course Smart. See link in TITANium.)

The Associated Press Stylebook is a general reference guide needed to produce quality public relations copy for the media. There are no assigned readings in the Stylebook, but you are expected to be intimately familiar with its contents and structure. You are expected to use it each time you produce a media tool in this class. Your use of correct AP style will be verified through assignment grading and online quizzes. You may use an older edition of the Stylebook if you wish.

Recommended texts

Diggs-Brown, B. (2007). *The PR styleguide: Formats for public relations practice* (2 ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Smith, R. D. (2005). *Strategic Planning for Public Relations* (3 ed). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

These books are tremendously worthwhile reading, especially for beginning professionals. **You are not required to purchase these books and you won't suffer any in this course if you don't have them.** But if you are planning a career in PR, I strongly recommend them.

Academic preparation

As Winston Churchill said, "*There is no substitute for hard work.*" Indeed, CSUF recommends that you spend 25 to 35 hours a week in study if you are a full-time college student:

http://nsm.fullerton.edu/nsm/fss/docs/NSM_Academic_Success_Pamphlet_3.docx

COMM 362 is complex, and much 'background' knowledge is essential to master public relations writing concepts. How much time you *invest* (and I use that word throughout this syllabus, purposely) is your decision. The more you view time spent as an investment, the more successful you are likely to be. Use the learning objectives (on TITANium) as your guide and ask lots of questions.

In COMM 362, students work as a community of scholars. You alone are responsible for your academic preparation – including communication with me and with others in class.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations prohibit me from discussing your academic performance or grades with others, or in a class forum. I cannot legally return your graded papers to a third party. To discuss specific issues about your work, contact me via e-mail.

Accommodations

CSU-Fullerton is committed to providing equal access to university programs and services for all students. Under university policies and federal and state law, students with documented disabilities are entitled to “reasonable accommodations” to ensure an equal opportunity for class performance. If you have a disability, or think you may have one, please contact the Office of Disabled Student Services <http://www.fullerton.edu/DSS/>. I will work with you on accommodations, but you must first register with DSS.

No retroactive accommodations will be made. In other words, if you wait till mid-semester to register with DSS, you cannot go back and retroactively get accommodations on work already completed.

If you are having any kind of difficulty that hinders your full participation in the academic experience, get help! There is lots of assistance on campus for students who need academic advising, personal counseling, social support, or medical information/ services. You have paid for this help through your fees and you should never hesitate to get the support you need, when you need it. If you are not sure where to seek assistance, ask!

Use of class materials

All written and electronic materials disseminated in this course are specifically intended for use in COMM 362. You are welcome to retain these materials after the course is ended. However, no reproduction or republication of these materials is authorized without my written permission. You are not authorized to upload faculty-provided materials from this course to any website without my explicit written permission. For additional information: <http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/cprtindx.htm>

Assignments and related policies

Read this section very carefully. Ask me about anything you do not understand. Every student is treated equally in this class; I will make no exceptions to the policies. **Note the critical information about due dates highlighted below.**

**Hey!
Read
this.**

Pre- and Post- test Assessments

You will complete online pre- and post-test assessments through Survey Monkey. These items will determine your knowledge/ skill coming into the class, and at the end of the class. Completion of these items is required but the items are *not graded*. Completion of both items earns you 50 points.

Online Quizzes

You will have five quizzes, each administered through TITANium. These will be open-note, open-book. You may take the quiz twice; your highest score will be applied. In exchange for the advantage of open note use, each quiz will only be available for a limited time. **Opening and closing dates will be announced in a posting in TITANium. If the time expires and you have not taken the quiz, there's no make up opportunity – and there are *no exceptions to this policy for any reason*.** Carefully review the tutorial before you attempt Quiz #1. Make sure your software settings are consistent with those called for in the tutorial. (Recommendation: Work in a campus computer lab or on a t1 connection, not over wifi.) Please read the statement in red again. If you forget to take a quiz, there's no exception to my policy. You won't get another chance.

Assignments

There are ten writing assignments in this course. Some will be completed individually and others as a team effort. Each will allow you to develop your skills in one or more areas of public relations writing (e.g., brainstorming, strategic planning, tactical objectives, PR copy writing, PR copy editing, interpersonal communication, etc.). **All assignments are due on days shown on the calendar.** I do not accept "late" assignments more than four days beyond the due date.

Electronic Portfolio (Assignment #10)

If you are planning a career in journalism, public relations, or any of the communication fields, you will need to assemble a portfolio of professional work to potential employers. Electronic portfolios are easy to assemble and allow you to illustrate a lot of different skill sets. In COMM 362, you will assemble an electronic portfolio – and you have a variety of options for doing so. You may use [WordPress](#), or [Weebly](#). **Additional details will follow.**

Your final portfolio must contain (1) a resume, (2) at least two work samples from COMM 362, and (3) at least one example of new media work that you created. This could be a podcast, video podcast, slide show, or YouTube video. It could be a link to your LinkedIn page. You may not use a Facebook page for your new media example. You may

include other samples of work. The portfolio will be evaluated for professionalism of appearance and existence of content. **See due date on calendar.**

Discussion Questions

There will be ten discussion questions offered at various points during the class. You may be asked to answer individually or provide a collaborative answer from your team. The answer must be posted by the end of the week in which the question is active. Each question is worth 5 points. **See due dates on calendar.** A discussion question response must clearly address the question(s) posed. It must be at least 100 words. It must include a reference, if requested. ***Additional details will follow.***

Team Project

The purpose of the project is to: (1) make you aware of the components of theory, research, and strategic planning as they apply in a public relations context; (2) allow you to get hands-on experience to develop answers that a PR person would need to have when faced with a 'real world' communications problem; and, (3) develop your public relations writing skills. ***Additional details will follow. See due date on calendar.***

Final Exam

The final exam involves creation of a public relations tool similar to tools you will have developed in previous assignments. ***Additional details will follow.***

Assignment submissions

All assignments will be submitted via e-mail as Word documents unless otherwise noted in the specific instructions provided. An assignment evaluation guide has also been provided, so you will be able to understand the performance expectations. Read it carefully, along with the document called Common Copy Errors.

Assignments submitted late get an immediate 10% point penalty. There's an additional 10% penalty taken for each 24-hour period late, up until the fourth day late (40% penalty). After that, the late assignment is not accepted for credit. There are no exceptions to this policy.

**Hey!
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Grades in this class are earned, and based completely on points, with the exception of the absence penalty noted above. ***There is no curve or other 'formula' involved. There is no extra credit.*** Your final grade will be based on the number of points you earn during the term. There are 2,000 points possible in this class, as shown below.

Item	# / Points	Weight	Due
Pre/ Post-Test Assessments	50 points possible	2.5% of course grade	See dates in calendar. <i>These items are not graded.</i> The point credit is earned for completion of both items.
Online Quizzes	5 @ 100 points each	25% of course grade	Due dates may vary. Announcements will be made in TITANium.
Assignments	5 individual + 5 team @ 100 points each	50% of course grade	Fridays at 8 a.m.
Discussion questions	50 points possible	2.5% of course grade	Saturday nights at midnight.
Team Project	1 @ 200 points	10% of course grade	See calendar.
Final exam	200 points	10% of course grade	See calendar.

How points earned result in a final letter grade:

	Percentage of total points (approx.)	Total points earned	Final letter grade	(GPA)
Superior attainment of course objectives	Greater than 93%	1,860 – 2,000	A	4.0
Superior attainment of course objectives	90 – 92.9%	1,800 – 1,859	A-	3.7
Good attainment of course objectives	87 – 89.9%	1,740 – 1,799	B+	3.3
Good attainment of course objectives	83 – 86.9%	1,660 – 1,739	B	3.0
Good attainment of course objectives	80 – 82.9%	1,600 – 1,659	B-	2.7
Good attainment of course objectives	77 – 79.9%	1,540 – 1,599	C+	2.3
Good attainment of course objectives	73 – 76.9%	1,460 – 1,539	C	2.0
Note! If your final grade is less than a C (2.0), you will not be able to advance to COMM 464.				
Acceptable attainment of course objectives	70 – 72.9%	1,400 – 1,459	C-	1.7
Poor attainment of course objectives	67 – 69.9%	1,340 – 1,399	D+	1.0
Poor attainment of course objectives	60 – 66.9%	1,200 – 1,339	D	.70
Non-attainment of course objectives	59% or less	1,199 or less	F	0

Grades are kept in TITANium, and this method has proven to be very reliable. However, in the event of a discrepancy, it is important for you to have accurate records. Save a copy of everything you submit for this class. Please save a copy of all graded papers I return to you. On the last class day before the final exam, the assignment grades entered for you in the grade book will be considered to be correct unless you notify me at that point.

Academic honesty

This class will involve individual and team-based work. Honest collaboration is expected. You are free to discuss your individual assignments with others in the class. However, it is unacceptable to turn in work which appears to me to be copied, either all or in part, from a single original. Seldom if ever will assignments other than exams involve only one way of expressing a correct answer. If multiple individual assignments submitted are substantially non-original in appearance (using the same form of expression in content or context), they will cause me to question their 'originality.' Let's not have that discussion, please.

Because plagiarism is a serious concern in academe, I do electronic searches to verify the originality of content and the accuracy of reported sources. Do not plagiarize. If in doubt about sourcing, ask. Plagiarized papers do not earn credit in this class and may require filing of a report of academic dishonesty with the university.

COMM 362 – SPRING 2015 CALENDAR

Please see the syllabus + TITANium for detailed description of all course objectives, assignments, etc.

This calendar will be updated, if needed, during the semester. Updates will be announced and posted on TITANium. Any adjustment of assignment dates will be to your advantage not mine (meaning later due dates, not earlier).

Course weeks begin on Monday as shown below.

- Each **Discussion Question** response must be posted by Saturday evening at midnight of the week it is due.
- Each week's **Assignment** must be submitted by Friday at 8 a.m. of that week.
- Specific opening and closing dates for **Quizzes** will be announced in TITANium. **Do not miss the dates. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes, and no "extra credit."**
- There are special due dates for the **Team Project** and **Final Exam**, as shown on the calendar below.

Week and Topic (Weeks start on Mondays as shown)	DQ	Assignment <i>Due Friday at 8 a.m.</i>	Quiz	Required text pages to read	Notes / other
Week 1 - Class Introduction Week of Jan. 19	#1	Pre-test assessment		1-5 21-23 + TITANium Materials	Carefully read the syllabus. Join a team ASAP
Week 2 - Situations & Organizations Week of Jan. 26		#1 (Memo) (team)		37-39 225-229 + TITANium Materials	
Week 3 – Legal & Ethical Issues Week of Feb. 2	#2	#2 (policy statement) (team)	#1	26-30 34-36 + TITANium Materials	Our focus this week is primarily on the legal issues. Review the "Briefing on Media Law" from your AP Stylebook.
Week 4 – Legal & Ethical Issues Week of Feb. 9	#3	#3 (Piney Woods Lumber) (solo)	#2	TITANium Materials	Our focus this week is primarily on the ethical issues.
Week 5 – Publics & Coalitions Week of Feb. 16	#4	#4 (Triangle Fire) (team)		30-33 121-129 165-173 + TITANium Materials	
Week 6 – Strategic Planning Week of Feb. 23			#3	41-69 + TITANium Materials	Make sure you spend a lot of time considering "action" and "response" in regard to PR strategy and writing.

Week 7 – Tactics/ Tools – print Week of March 2	#5	#5 (news releases - <u>1ST Draft</u>) (solo)		TITANium materials	Pay close attention to the sample news releases and related information. Use your AP Stylebook!
Week 8 – Tactics/ Tools – print Week of March 9		#5 (news releases - <u>Final</u>) (solo)		TITANium materials	Closely review the letters handout and examples. We'll be writing letters in Week 11.
Week 9 – Tactics/ Tools – broadcast Week of March 16	#6	#6 (PSA) (solo)	#4	139-150 + TITANium materials	Pay close attention to the audio/ video examples of PSAs.
Week 10 – Tactics/ Tools – social media Week of March 23	#7			105-118 160-164 + TITANium materials	Pay close attention to the Knott's Berry Farm example of social media in action.
Spring Break Week is March 30 – April 5					
Week 11 – Tactics/ Tools - letters Week of April 6		#7 (letters) (solo)		199-220 + TITANium materials	
Week 12 – Integrated Marketing Communication Week of April 13	#8	#8 (social media) (team)	#5	24-25 + TITANium materials	
Week 13 – Evaluating Success Week of April 20	#9	#9 (COMM WEEK event summary)		230-233 221-224 + TITANium materials	COMM WEEK is this week. This is an unparalleled experience to learn from industry professionals. Attend every COMM WEEK event that you can!
Week 14 – Review and reflect Week of April 27		#10 Weebly portfolio (solo) Post-test assessment			
Week 16 – Team Project due Week of May 4	#10	Submit your completed Team Project by Monday, May 4 at noon. <u>No late papers! No exceptions!</u>			
Final Exam Week Week of May 11		Submit your completed Final Exam by Monday, May 11 at noon. <u>No late papers! No exceptions!</u>			