

CAP 321: Media Relations Writing

Professor Tim Penning, PhD, APR

Fall 2016
Mon-Wed 4:30-5:45
Mon LSH 229; Wed HRY 114

LSH 124, 331-3478
penningt@gvsu.edu
Office hours: Mon 12-2 & Tues 1-3

Course Description:

This course prepares public relations students with both knowledge and practice of writing skills used in the public relations profession, with special emphasis on media relations. Includes writing news releases, tip sheets, fact sheets, backgrounders, pitch letters, advisories, op-ed columns, and media kits. Students will gain an understanding of what news is, how the news media works in different settings, and how media relations fits into the broader public relations program. In addition to regular writing assignments, topics addressed include recognizing news opportunities, selecting and contacting appropriate news media, handling news interviews, and evaluating media relations efforts.

Prerequisites:

CAP 220--Fundamentals of Public Relations
CJR 256—News Reporting I

Drop Deadline

Last day to drop the course and receive a "W" is 5 p.m. October 28, full tuition September 2.

Required Texts:

Associated Press (AP) Stylebook and Libel Manual. (You should have a copy from CJR 256 or get a new one; an online subscription to APA is also an option).

"Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques" by Wilcox and Reber, 8th edition

*Also check Blackboard folders that correspond with the lecture topics on the class calendar and be sure you have read anything associated with that week's lecture prior to class. You will be asked about readings in class during lecture time.

Course Objectives

- To help students develop a deeper understanding of what news is as it relates to public relations.
- To help students identify news opportunities and present them to the news media appropriately in writing.
- To present a framework to comprehend the ways journalists work and how they can work productively with public relations practitioners.
- To understand the various methods of distributing news to the news media, and increasingly directly to publics.
- To develop the skills of writing specific media relations tools.

- To foster an understanding of how media relations is part of a broader public relations strategy or campaign.
- To learn methods of useful evaluation of media relations efforts in accordance with broad public relations objectives.

Course Assignments:

This class will include a group project to analyze a set of media outlets, writing exercises in a lab, several assignments done outside of class, a media kit prepared for a client, and a final exam. Each are explained here:

Group Media Analysis

Students will work in groups to analyze a category of media outlets in West Michigan. The categories are: television, radio, newspaper, magazine, business journals, and online only media. See more details on the “Group Media Analysis Presentation Assignment” instructions posted to Blackboard.

Lab Writing Assignments

Students will complete 10 writing assignments (one of which is the practice contact list, see below) in the writing lab during class (with the exception of the practice contact list—see below). Assignments will be related to material covered in class on the first session of the week; in the second section (which meets in a lab) students will receive the assignment and have the class period to complete it. There is an evaluation/revision checklist on Blackboard—use it in class to guide your editing and revising. Students will have one opportunity to revise each assignment. If you choose to revise your graded assignment you must turn it in one week after it has been returned from the professor—if you revise an assignment, attach the original to the revision. Each assignment scenario will be posted to Blackboard and available one half hour before class starts. All lab assignments must be completed in the lab and turned in before the end of the lab period.

Media Contact List Practice Assignment

Using Cision software, each student will make a media contact list as a practice exercise. This will be done outside of class/lab time and turned in separately as one of the 10 writing assignments. See more in the “Media Contact List Practice Assignment” instructions on Blackboard.

Client Media Kit

Students must also complete a media kit for a “client.” The clients will be assigned, and each client will have several students working for them. However, each student will work *individually* on the project. Details are on the “Media Kit Assignment” instructions on Blackboard.

Final Exam

A comprehensive **final** exam will include 10 short-essay questions about the principles and strategies of media relations discussed in class.

Grading:

Grades will generally be assigned according to the following: A =100-93; A-92-90; B+= 89-87; B=86-83; B-=82-80; C+=79-76; C=75-72; C- =71-69; D+=68-65; D=64-60; F=59 and below.

Grades will be based on the following percentages of assigned work:

Lab writing assignments	30%
Media Analysis	20%
Client Media kit	30%
Final exam	20%

The quality of your writing generally follows these guidelines:

“A” = Excellent--professional quality, writing is crisp, clear, creative, news savvy evident

“B” = Good--but room for improvement in one or two areas,

“C” = Average--the bare minimum effort evident, errors in AP style, grammar, format etc, news value unclear

“D” = Poor--sloppy grammatically and in style, not newsworthy, editorializing evident

“F” = Incomplete—lacks content, serious flaws in writing style, grammar, newsworthiness

Course Policies:

- All written work should be typed, double-spaced, stapled and on 8 ½ x 11 paper in standard 12pt type., following the news format we discuss in class. Failure to do so will result in a ZERO on the assignment.
- Spelling, grammar, punctuation and correct use of AP style will be considered in grading written assignments.
- If you don't proofread, I don't read. Assignments will receive an AUTOMATIC ZERO if there are three or more grammatical, AP or mechanical errors.
- Deadlines are to be met on time, just as they are in the workplace. If you know in advance you must miss a class for a valid reason, you may turn the assignment in early.
- NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED. EVER. If the first draft is late, you may not do a revision.
- All lab writing assignments must be written **in the lab**. No exceptions. If you don't attend the lab session, or the lecture that week, you get a zero for that assignment.
- Reading assignments should be completed prior to class (see class calendar). Lectures are related to the assigned reading but do not repeat what's in the text; they build on that base of information. You will be lost in class if you haven't kept up on the reading.
- Attendance is mandatory, and participation in class discussions is expected. Respect others when they are speaking.
- Plagiarism is unacceptable (this includes copy/paste of client material). Penalties for plagiarism include failure of the course and/or dismissal from the university. (See student code)

CAP 321 Course Calendar:

*Remember, you are responsible to read anything posted to Blackboard for each week's subject BEFORE class. Also **check Blackboard** for readings in folders named for the topic of the day.

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT DUE
Aug 29	Intro to course	
Aug 30	Basic writing review	Ch 1
Sep 5	LABOR DAY –NO CLASS	
Sep 7	Understanding news;	Ch 3
Sep 12	<i>Clients in class</i>	
Sep 14	Working with reporters, contact lists;	Ch 4
Sep 19	Headlines, leads, quotes	Ch 5 (pp81-87); 1-Practice contact list
Sep 21	Lab drill: headlines, leads, quotes	
Sep 26	News releases	Ch 5
Sep 28		2- news release
Oct 3	Radio/audio news releases (ANR)	Ch 9 (pp150-157)
Oct 5		3-ANR
Oct 10	Video news releases (VNR)	Ch 9 (pp158-173)
Oct 12		4-VNR
Oct 17	Social media news release	Ch 5 (pp88-94)
Oct 19		5- Social media release
Oct 24	Feature releases (PRSA)	Ch 7 (pp114-127)
Oct 26		6-Feature release
Oct 31	Pitch letters	Ch 6 (pp97-101)
Nov 2		7-pitch letter
Nov 7	Advisories/tip sheets	Ch 6 (pp101-102); Media Analysis Presentations
Nov 9		8-Tip sheet
Nov 14	Fact Sheets	Ch 6 (pp97-101)
Nov 16		9-Fact sheet
Nov 21	Media kits	Ch 6 (pp103-104)
Nov 23	THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS	
Nov 28	Opinions, Editorials	Ch 7 (pp127-130)
Nov 30		10-Op-ed
Dec 5	Measuring media relations; media training	Ch 19
Dec 7	Present media kits to clients	MEDIA KITS DUE
Dec 14	FINAL EXAM	4-5:50 pm in LSH 229