Course Syllabus

COMM-4390_B01 – Topics in Communication: Public Relations Writing
MT 12:00-2:00pm, TBA

Dr. Michelle M. Maresh-Fuehrer
Associate Professor of Public Relations
Office: Bay Hall 329
Office Hours: (Face to Face) MT 11:00AM-11:50AM & 2:15-3:00PM; (Virtual) W 2:00-4:00PM; By Appointment
Office Phone: 361-825-2273
E-mail: michelle.maresh-fuehrer@tamucc.edu

Course Description
This course will introduce students to the basic principles and formatting requirements for public relations writing. Students will gain theoretical and practical knowledge of writing for specific audiences, as well as experience in writing documents such as social media messaging, news releases, fact sheets, backgrounders, media lists, media advisories, pitch letters, radio scripts, public service announcement scripts, memos, company histories, newsletters, grant applications, etc.

Student Learning Objectives
Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:
✓ Write public relations releases for print, electronic, and social media
✓ Write public relations documents with a strategic focus on targeting specific audiences
✓ Apply Associated Press style requirements
✓ Understand the basic principles of public relations writing
✓ Consider the ethical and legal issues involved in public relations writing

Required or Recommended Readings
Required Books:
The Associated Press Stylebook 2018
(FREE) Writing for Strategic Communication Industries: https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/stratcommwriting/

Website: Course assignments, discussion notes, and other pertinent messages will be posted on Blackboard. Students should verify that they receive Blackboard notifications and should check for messages daily.

Major Course Requirements
*Assignment descriptions/requirements appear on the 4th page of this syllabus.
AP Style Quizzes (3 at 10 points each) 40 points
Editing Minis (2 at 25 points each) 50 points
Writing Portfolio 100 points
Participation (10 days at 5 points each) 50 points

Total Points: 240

Grade Calculation:  
A 90% of the total points (216 points – 240 points)
B 80% of the total points (192 points – 215 points)
C 70% of the total points (168 points – 191 points)
D 60% of the total points (144 points – 167 points)
F 50% of the total points (120 points – 143 points)

A Successful Course Experience
A successful experience in this course will depend on your individual commitment and work ethic. I encourage all students to visit with me frequently throughout the semester, rather than waiting until the end of the semester to ask questions or express concerns. As in most courses, students should be proactive about their work and ready to discuss concepts and share examples during class. Furthermore, a professor who is familiar with their students is better able to help their students accomplish their personal goals, so make yourself known! If you have suggestions that will enrich your learning experience, please let me know.
Course Policies

Am I required to attend this course?

- Prompt arrival, attendance, and participation are all vital to your success in this course. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and contribute to the classroom experience by actively listening, asking questions, sharing examples, participating in discussions, and taking part in class activities.
- Attendance and participation will be graded. Each student will earn 5 points for every class session that they attend. If students attend but do not participate in class, I reserve the right to assign 0 points for the day. In all fairness, students will be notified that their lack of participation will result in 0 points before points are assigned.

What are your expectations for my assignments?

- It should go without saying that quality work is an expectation. As a Communication student, it is expected that you will have effective writing and speaking skills and that you will seek my help if you need assistance in these areas. It is also expected that your work will be free from plagiarism and will show that you are thinking “beyond the textbook.”
- All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date shown on the course syllabus, unless otherwise noted. If otherwise noted, assignments are due on the exact date and at the exact time noted on the assignment. If an assignment is late or missed, the student will not receive credit for the assignment.
- Assignments should be turned in as a hard copy unless otherwise noted. If an assignment is turned in using a means other than hard copy, the student will not receive credit for the assignment. Students should complete assignments on time to reduce the risk of emergencies, such as running out of ink, paper, losing their work, or not having access to a printer or computer.

What should I do if I am going to be absent?

- In the event of an absence, I must be notified before the missed class period in order for the absence to be excused. If I am not notified before the missed class period, the absence will be considered unexcused unless the student provides documentation for an excused absence (i.e., athletics, family emergencies, illness, university-sponsored travel). In this case, I reserve the right to determine whether an absence is excused.
- Late work will only be accepted for excused absences and must be completed within 7 days of the missed deadline.
- Regardless of the status of an absence, students are responsible for obtaining the information that was missed during class in a timely manner. Students should visit Blackboard to obtain notes and assignment pages. Students may also wish to select a classmate(s) at the beginning of the semester that will agree to help with this task.

I have a question about one of my grades, what should I do?

- Should a student have a question about their grade on a particular assignment, I follow the 24/7 rule: students must approach me no sooner than 24 hours and no later than 7 days after the assignment has been returned. Once 7 days have passed, the topic will be closed for discussion.

What type of citations should I use in my writing and speaking assignments?

- All assignments that require scholarly citations should adhere to the 2018 edition of the AP style book.

I need help with my work, what should I do?

- Should any situation arise, where I can be of assistance (i.e., you do not have a printer; you do not understand the assignment guidelines, etc.), please e-mail me or come talk to me.
- I am happy to help students with their understanding of assignments by reading through one draft of each class assignment; however, I will not be able to provide adequate assistance within 48 hours of a deadline, so students should be proactive about starting their assignments and seeking feedback early.

What are the rules for classroom conduct?

- I treat my classroom as a small community; thus, we will maintain a harassment-free environment that is welcoming to different viewpoints and ideas. Any profane or inappropriate ethnic, gender, racial, age, appearance, and/or lifestyle-related comments will not be accepted. Any student who violates this policy will be asked to leave the classroom.
- Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of
other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VIII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, online classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Where can I find class notes and assignment pages?
- In line with the University’s efforts to be more environmentally responsible, you will need to access our course page on Blackboard to download class notes and assignment pages. If you have concerns about this for any reason, please come visit with me so we can identify a solution together.

Where can I reach the instructor to ask questions about class?
- You may reach me in person or by phone in my office during office hours or via e-mail. I will respond to e-mail within 24 hours Monday-Friday. During the weekend, I will make every effort to respond to your e-mail but cannot guarantee a timely response.
- I am happy to be friends on social media, but please do not ask questions about class using social media channels.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade (0) on the assignment. Any student receiving more than one “0” for academic dishonesty or plagiarism will fail the course and may be expelled from the program. Note: All violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Dean and Office of Student Affairs who maintains document of such offenses for at least 5 years.

Academic Advising
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Disabilities Accommodations
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Dropping a Course
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Monday, July 29 is the last day to drop a course this semester.

Grade Appeals
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the
matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

### Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

### Assignment Descriptions

**Please do not use these guidelines to begin your work early, as they are incomplete and subject to change. Full descriptions and grading rubrics will be provided to you closer to the respective due dates.**

**AP Style Quizzes** (3 at 10 points = 30 points)

Understanding AP Style is essential for public relations practice. Students will be given brief quizzes designed to understand the fundamentals of AP Style in PR writing.

**Editing Minis** (2 at 25 points = 50 points)

Students will be given two writing documents, such as press releases, and will be asked to identify the errors in formatting and edit for concise language and proper writing mechanics.

**Writing Portfolio** (100 points)

Students will be expected to design 5 original documents for a real or hypothetical client.

**Participation** (10 days at 5 points = 50 points)

Students will receive 5 points for each class period that they attend and actively participate; the professor reserves the right to assign partial or no credit should students attend, but not be actively engaged in the class. Students should download the Arkaive app in their phone’s app store or visit http://www.arkaive.com to check in during our allotted class meeting time. The sign-up code for our class is XXXX. Students should make it a habit to check in before they leave, as the professor will not be responsible for “remembering” that a student attended a class in which they did not check in.
# COMM-4390_B01 Schedule

**This schedule is tentative and subject to change. All changes will be to the benefit of the student.**

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<th>Monday, July 8</th>
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<td>READ/DISCUSS: Chapter 2 – The role of writing in strategic communication</td>
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