

Clemson University: Department of Communication
Fall 2018
COMM 3570-001 Public Relations Writing

Instructor: Andrew S. Pyle, Ph.D.

Class days, time, place: Tuesday/Thursday, 2:00-3:15 p.m., Daniel 310
Combined lab (COMM 3571): Daniel 100B, Tuesdays 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Instructor office: Strode 415

Instructor's email: apyle@g.clemson.edu (best way to reach me)

Office hours: Tuesdays 8:00-9:00 a.m. & 1:00-2:00 p.m.
Thursdays 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. & 1:00-2:00 p.m.
Thursdays 4:00-5:00 p.m. *[online]*

I'm also available to grab a coffee or get a bite to eat – I'm in the Faculty Friends program and have a meal plan, so I can swipe us in at the dining hall. It may not be fine dining, but... it'll be free!

Course Expectations and Instructor's Policies

1. *Reading prior to class is essential.* Our class time will be centered on dialogue about readings, not a reiteration of them. Because we meet only twice per week, you will often have multiple chapters to read per class. Please read the material and come with questions or items to discuss; I am interested in hearing your thoughts on what we've read. Books (including the *AP Style Guide*) and readings should be brought to class for reference during in-class assignments.
2. *Attendance* is important. You lose points by missing class. After two unexcused absences (one week worth of classes) you will lose 10 points per unexcused absence. Homework is assigned in this class and is collected. In-class exercises cannot be made up outside of class. If you anticipate an absence (for example, excused absences related to travel for university-sponsored events), assignments must be submitted *before* the class meets. ***It is difficult to get a grade of C or higher if you miss more than a week (two class periods) or are frequently late to class.*** If I am not in class within 15 minutes of the official start time you are excused for the day – this will be unusual, and you should expect an email from me if the course schedule will be changed for any reason.
3. Absence on the day of a test or quiz should not occur. For an absence on one of these days to be excused, you must contact the instructor to explain on or before the test day and have written verification of the reason for your absence. Missing a test without good reason could lead to course failure.
4. Please follow your instructor's instructions about use of technology during class. For some class activities, you will be encouraged to tap the Internet. While laptops will sometimes be necessary for class activities, as a rule I expect laptops to be closed and phones to be put away when class begins. Make sure your cell phone's ringer is turned off during class.
5. I accept written work at the beginning of class. Please do not turn in work past the due date and time unless I have given you permission to do so. Knowing that assignments will be due, printed, at the beginning of class, printer problems on the morning an assignment is due will not count as a valid excuse for not having work ready to turn in at the beginning of class.
6. *Review your writing.* I expect to see final drafts – this means you should prepare to **write several drafts before submitting the final one to me.** If you need help with organizing ideas or understanding AP style, visit or email me more than one day before the assignment is due (I will not review assignments within 24 hours of their due date, as it takes more than a day to review and rewrite a draft). I will indicate on the assignment whether or not it is allowable to have friends review and edit your work; in all other cases, *it*

will be considered cheating if you allow others to edit or proofread your papers. Cheaters will be reported and will most likely fail the assignment.

7. I encourage you to use the University's Writing Center and its on-line resources for help with writing and editing. You can visit the Center in the Academic Success Center, room 307 (see website for times and location specifics as they change); <http://www.clemson.edu/centers-institutes/writing/>
8. ALWAYS keep an extra copy of any written work assigned in this class so you have an extra copy to show me. It is a good idea to always email final versions of your work to yourself.

I look forward to working with you in this class. It's important that you get a good foundation in this course for your future classes, internships, and profession.

Brief instructor biography: My name is Andrew Pyle, and I am an assistant professor of communication. My research mostly focuses on crisis and emergency communication in intercultural contexts. I'm also interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning, or how we as educators can be more effective in teaching and mentorship. I am presently studying how we can better respond to crisis events on college campuses, and at how organizations utilize social media to respond to crisis events.

Outside of work, I am married and have two sons. My sons' names are Henry (3) & Charlie (10 months). Henry and Charlie are adorable. Expect to see an alarming number of cute pictures over the course of the semester. My wife is a CPA and worked as an auditor for PwC until she had our first son and decided to stay home with him. I'm excited to be working with you this semester!

UNIVERSITY'S POLICY STATEMENTS

Academic Integrity

As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a "high seminary of learning." Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form.

When, in the opinion of a faculty member, there is evidence that a student has committed an act of academic dishonesty, the faculty member shall make a formal written charge of academic dishonesty, including a description of the misconduct, to the Associate Dean for Curriculum in the Office of Undergraduate Studies. At the same time, the faculty member may, but is not required to, inform each involved student privately of the nature of the alleged charge.

You may not submit any work for this class that you have prepared for another class.

To review the entire academic integrity policy, you may access it here:

http://www.clemson.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-handbook/universitypolicies/academic_integrity.html

Emergency Preparedness

As part of our commitment to maintaining a safe learning environment, I ask that you be familiar with the basic emergency response procedures for a variety of situations including severe weather, medical emergencies, and workplace and campus violence. Please review the university's Emergency Preparedness Guides (<http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/cufd/campusemergencymanagement/preparedness.html>). Pay attention to all university-related emergency notices and respond accordingly.

Evacuation:

- When evacuating buildings, do not use elevators as they may lose power, stranding riders.
- Familiarize yourself with the locations of stairwells and exits.

- Individuals needing assistance evacuating should move to a stairwell away from the hazard, dial 911, and provide the Dispatcher with their exact location and what they need regarding evacuation.
- When evacuating follow the instructions provided by Public Safety personnel to reach a safe place.
- To seek “Tornado Safer Places,” get to the lowest level of the building time allows, stay away from areas with windows and glass, and put as many walls as you can between yourself and the outside. In public buildings, bathrooms typically have an additional wall.

Active Shooter:

- Always call 911 as soon as you possibly can.
- Run away from the area, if it is safe to do so, time allows and the gunman is not nearby.
- Hide if the gunman is too close to your location. Find a safer place, lock and barricade doors, turn lights out and cell phones off or to vibrate.
- Fight. As a last resort, resolve to fight the intruder with everything you have at your disposal.

A short video prepared and presented by the Department of Homeland Security can be found at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VcSwejU2D0>

The Clemson University Title IX (Sexual Harassment) Statement

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, veteran’s status, genetic information or protected activity (e.g., opposition to prohibited discrimination or participation in any complaint process, etc.) in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This policy is located at <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix/>. Mr. Jerry Knighton is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator. and is also the Director of Access and Equity. His office is located at 111 Holtzendorrf Hall, 864.656.3181 (voice) or 864.565.0899 (TDD).

STUDENT SUPPORT RESOURCES

Clemson Email Accounts

Students must use their Clemson email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://www.clemson.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-handbook/universitypolicies/email-communications.html> for more information.

Office of Disability Services

Students with disabilities who need accommodations should make an appointment with Dr. Arlene Stewart, Director of Disability Services, to discuss specific needs within the first month of classes. Students should present a Faculty Accommodation Letter from Student Disability Services when they meet with instructors. Student Disability Services is located in Suite 239 Academic Success Building (656-6848; sds-1@clemson.edu). Please be aware that accommodations are not retroactive and new Faculty Accommodation Letters must be presented each semester.

Career Services

The Career Center is a wonderful resource. As you prepare for graduation and begin thinking about what comes next, the Career Center is a great place to visit http://career.clemson.edu/michelin_career_center/students/

University Libraries

Be sure to review library services - there are numerous services available to you as a Clemson student, such as:

- Source evaluation and selecting the right database for your work
- Citation assistance: Ensuring you are not inadvertently committing plagiarism
- “Ask a Librarian” <http://clemson.libguides.com/ask>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

The university provides students with counseling and psychological support services. Please feel encouraged to reach out to and utilize these services.

<http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/redfern/mental-health/>

CRITICAL THINKING

Clemson Thinks2 Integration:

This class participates in the Clemson Thinks2 program, “an ambitious experiment in critical thinking that will transform learning and teaching through second-year Critical Thinking (CT) Seminars, a cohort of CT2 Faculty Scholars, faculty development, rigorous assessment, and scholarly research.”

As such, during the semester, we will focus on developing important critical thinking skills through in-class activities and discussions and homework assignments. Critical thinking is crucial in being a successful student, community member, and employee so it is vital that we center our focus around honing those skills as they will serve us not only in public relations practice, but also in all aspects of our personal and professional lives. We will also complete a critical thinking pre-test at the beginning of the semester, followed by a post-test at the end of the semester.



You can find more information about the program at the following site:

<http://www.clemson.edu/academics/programs/thinks2/>

Below are some of the activities and assignments that will help us work on our critical thinking skills – for a complete list of assignments, please refer to the point breakdown on p. 5 and for more information on each assignment, please check the assignment descriptions on Canvas.

- Discussion of the News – students will be expected to be aware of what’s happening in the world around us, and to be prepared to respond to regional, national, and international events from a PR perspective. You will be expected to apply PR theory & concepts to assessing how to respond to events in the news
- Writing projects – students will apply lessons from in-class discussion, our textbook, and our guest speakers to produce high-quality content that will prepare students to pursue internships and entry-level positions in the PR industry.
- Case studies – Students will be provided with PR case studies and will be expected to respond to these situations from an ethical, theory-based perspective. Applying content learned in the course will be integral to the successful case study presentation.
- Critical Thinking portfolio – This will be the culmination of your CT² work over the course of the semester – your projects, news assessment, and case study write-ups will become part of this portfolio and will be a tangible demonstration of your growth in critical thinking skills from August to December.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Identify all stakeholders of an organization and their communication needs.
2. Write effective communication products (using precise language and AP style) for a variety of PR and business functions.
3. Employ theory and strategy to choose appropriate and ethical PR tactics.
4. Analyze and critique past and current PR tactics.

TEXTS

Required:



Roberts, J (2016). *Writing for strategic communication industries.*

<https://osu.pb.unizin.org/stratcommwriting/front-matter/about-the-author/>



Saylor (2016). *Mastering public relations.*

<https://www.saylor.org/site/textbooks/Mastering%20Public%20Relations.pdf>



The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (2015). New York: Basic Books.

(Or: Utilize campus resources such as the Online Writing Lab [OWL] at Purdue)

Recommended:

You should have a dictionary, a thesaurus and a writing/grammar guide (e.g. *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White) to reference as you write and edit. We will not review all grammar rules in class, but you will be expected to know them; reviewing a writing manual will therefore be essential for your success. You can likely find what you need online, but having a writing/grammar guide is not a bad idea.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

| Assignment | Points Possible |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Writing assignments | (10 @ 20 pts. each) 200 pts. |
| Case study presentation | 150 pts. |
| Final project | 300 pts. |
| Final Exam (Crisis Simulation) | 100 pts. |
| Class participation | (30 for CT ² tests, 15 each) 100 pts. |
| CT ² Pre-test | (15 pts.) |
| CT ² Post-test | (15 pts.) |
| Lab Engagement | 150 pts. |
| Total Points: 1000 pts. | |

Grading Scale (no rounding up)

A = 100-90%, B = 89.9-80%, C = 79.9-70%, D = 69.9-60%, F = 59.9-0%

Assignments – *Subject to change based on course needs*

Writing Projects

Effective writing for PR must have persuasive and concise content, as well as be free of errors. Writing should follow the Associated Press (AP) style. You should proofread all writing assignments several times and refer to the *AP Style Guide* as well as any other writing/grammar guides to ensure your work is clear and correct.

You will be graded on content as well as on AP style and grammar. Typos, grammar and spelling errors will count three points off, and style errors will count two points off. Beginning October 19 (immediately following fall break), these penalties will double (six points for typos/grammar/spelling; four for style errors). Egregious errors, like misspelling the company’s name or having a major typo in the headline, will be counted off 5 points (10 points after October 19). More than one of these significant errors will result in failing the assignment. In the real world of business writing, you do not get second chances to make such large errors.

Assignments will be made in each class for the next class, giving you one week to prepare each piece. One or more writing assignments may be given to complete in class. I will give you advance notice of in-class assignments so that you may bring computers and reference material as needed.

Writing projects must:

1. Be printed and turned in at the beginning of class AND submitted on Canvas. I will not accept emailed papers. Late papers will not be accepted (grade will be zero); if you think you may miss class, submit the assignment on Canvas anyway. I will still review late work and give you feedback on it if you would like the opportunity to improve your writing.
2. Be written and proofed by you alone. Receiving outside help will be considered cheating. I will let you know of any assignments that allow for outside editing help. The exception to this rule is for group projects, in which I expect you to critique and edit your teammates' work.
3. Be within the assigned word or page length.
4. Be typed in a standard 12-point font, double-spaced (unless otherwise stated). I will accept papers printed on both sides of the page to save paper, but note that this is often not acceptable in a professional setting.

Case Studies

Each of you will work in teams of 3 or 4 to present a case study. The cases can be found on Canvas. You are expected to read the case and follow the ROPE method (Hayes, Hendrix, Kumar, 2013 pp. 43-44; see first posting of "cases" PDF on Canvas) to evaluate it. You will likely also want to borrow the *Public Relations Cases* text from me to help define key terms and concepts (***If you wish to borrow the book you must request it by the class period before you present, and must return it the day you present***). You will then present the case and your assessment to the class using a multi-modal presentation format – you will make a video (no more than 3 minutes long) using Spark Video, build a Spark Page, and create a Spark Post. You may focus on any area of the presentation you like for each of the products, but across the three products you will need to:

- Describe and summarize the case to us, but please go beyond what is written. I expect to see some research into the background of the company. You may also find additional materials from the campaign or from other similar campaigns.
- Conduct a ROPE analysis
- Suggest how the organization could have been more successful (using course concepts/theory)

After presenting your case and the content you developed, you will need to lead a short in-class discussion about the case. All members of the team should contribute to the presentation. Your presentations should last 15–25 minutes; please do not exceed a half-hour (unless class discussion warrants the time).

Your grades will be determined based on how creatively you utilize the Adobe Spark platforms, how well you analyze the case using the ROPE method, how well you lead class discussion, the outside materials you were able to use to bring the case to life, and your presentation skills. Your Spark Page will need to include an executive summary of the additional background information you utilized to present your case and an outline of the role each group member took.

This is an opportunity to tap into some excellent resources available to you as students at Clemson. This type of page can live on after the class ends as part of your digital portfolio.

Final Project

We will identify news stories or companies in a manner to be determined later in the semester. You will then develop the following written materials based on one story:

1. A three-page magazine or newsletter article
2. A one-page press release
3. A half-page website or blog post

4. At least three 140-character (maximum) Twitter posts that work together and support/announce/accentuate your story

You will need to conduct a Spark Page to host your work for this capstone. It should begin with an overview describing the media outlets to which you would submit each piece, how you selected these outlets/audiences, any background research you performed, and any additional items you think would persuasively present your story (e.g. photos, interviews, etc.).

On the week the final projects are due you will submit to Canvas and present your sites to your classmates. Presentations cannot exceed **three minutes** in length and should concisely describe the work you've done.

Class Participation & The News

Up to 70 points in the class may be used at my discretion for assignments such as in-class activities or interaction with guest speakers, as well as participation in class discussions. You are expected and encouraged to share with the class your ideas, analyses, writing samples, critiques and experiences.

One major piece of your participation score is tracking what is happening in the news. Each week you will be answering the question “What’s in the news” in a discussion group on Canvas. There is a write-up on Canvas with the full details of this assignment. A large part of your job as a public relations practitioner will be to remain up-to-date on what is happening in the world and how it relates to your organization(s) or client(s). I will regularly call on students to share in class about the discussions you are having on Canvas.

If you haven't, I recommend signing up for theSkimm – a service that tracks headlines and sends out an email update each morning with key headlines from around the U.S. and around the world. To begin following theSkimm, you can follow this link: <http://www.theskimm.com/?r=09108da7> - you will receive one email per day, Monday-Friday in the morning. You do not have to use theSkimm, but it is a useful resource.

For more instruction on these projects and the grading rubrics I will use, please see Canvas.

COMM 3570 Weekly Schedule Fall 2018

| Week | Date | Chapter Topics, Activities | Readings | Assignment |
|------|------------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Aug 23 | Introductions, syllabus, course overview; Understanding Stakeholders | MPR* Ch. 1 | CT ² Pre-test |
| 2 | Aug 28 Aug 30 | What is PR/PR Writing? In-class: Interview a classmate | MPR Ch. 2 -- WSC Ch. 9; <i>Stylebook</i> PDF | Essay About You due Aug 30 |
| 3 | Sep 4 Sep 6 | Writing Skills for PR In-class: Classmate lead paragraph | WSC Ch. 2 -- WSC Ch. 5 | N/A -- Write a Lead |
| 4 | Sep 11 Sep 13 | Ethics & Persuasion In-class: Classmate quotation | MPR Ch. 11 (p. 138) -- WSC Ch. 3 | N/A -- Quotations |
| 5 | Sep 18 | Research & Planning | MPR Ch. 8 | N/A |

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|----|------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|
| | Sep 20 | -- ROPE | -- MPR Ch. 9 | -- Press Release |
| 6 | Sep 25 Sep 27 | Media Relations -- Case Study 3-1 | WSC Ch. 2 -- WSC Ch. 8 | N/A -- Twitter Copy |
| 7 | Oct 2 Oct 4 | Employee Relations -- Case Study 5-1 | MPR Ch. 6 -- MPR Ch. 7 | N/A -- Business Letter |
| 8 | Oct 9 Oct 11 | Member Relations -- Case Study 12-4 | MPR Ch. 10 | N/A Infographic easel.ly |
| 9 | Oct 16 Oct 18 | Case Study 8-1 -- Community Relations | WSC Ch. 11 -- WSC Ch. 7 | N/A -- Newsletter |
| 10 | Oct 23 Oct 25 | Case Study 6-1 -- Case Study 9-1; Peer Feedback | N&H Ch. 15 -- WSC Ch. 12 | N/A -- Brochures |
| 11 | Oct 30 Nov 1 | Self-Inflicted Crises -- Values in Public Relations | Pyle (2016) -- Pyle, Linvill, Gennett (2018) | |
| 12 | Nov 6 Nov 8 | Fall Break – No Class -- Case Study 12-1 | N/A -- ECC Ch. 1 | |
| 13 | Nov 13 Nov 15 | Media Kit Capstones -- Media Kit Capstones | N/A | Present Capstone Projects |
| 14 | Nov 20 Nov 22 | Crisis Scenario Prelim. Discussion -- Thanksgiving Break – No Class | Research Scenario | N/A |
| 15 | Nov 27 Nov 29 | Crisis & Risk in PR -- Crisis Simulation Prep | PEACE -- N/A | Prep for Crisis Simulation |
| 16 | Dec 4 Dec 6 | Crisis Simulation Writing -- Crisis Simulation | Review Scenario, learn role, review key concepts | Crisis Press Release |
| 17 | Dec 12 | Final Exam – Crisis Simulation Reflection | Reflection due Wednesday, Dec 12 by 5:00 p.m. | CT ² Post-test |

*MPR = Mastering Public Relations; WSC = Writing for Strategic Communication Industries