

Loyola University Chicago  
**COMM 318 – 20W: Public Relations Writing Intensive**  
FALL SEMESTER 2023 Course Syllabus

Instructor: Professor Alyssa Burns  
Email: aburns1@luc.edu

### Required Text

- *Associated Press Stylebook* 56<sup>th</sup> edition (2022-2024 version), available as a book, app or online. Paperback version: ISBN# 9781541601659, E-Book version: ISBN# 9780917360701
- Additional readings will also be provided. I will post these on Sakai under Resources.

### Course Description

In this writing intensive course, students will learn the key components of effective public relations writing. News releases, pitch letters, key messages, a speech, a fact sheet, and social media writing are among the many types of writing we will practice and refine. Additionally, students will create a communications plan for a real business. News value and journalistic perspective will be discussed as well. Editing and proofreading are strongly emphasized.

### Writing Intensive

This course is designated as a writing intensive course for purposes of your Loyola curriculum.

### Information about Associated Press (AP) Style

Because newspapers use Associated Press (AP) Style, this is the standard format for print-based public relations writing. Today, most news has moved online, although AP Style is still important as a foundation for written communication.

If you work in public relations, you *will* be pitching journalists in your career. AP Style brings discipline and consistency to your writing. Knowing AP Style is a mark of your status as a professional. When you apply for a job, you'll take a writing test as part of the application process. That test will likely include knowledge of AP Style.

### Course Objectives

- Develop an understanding of public relations writing and develop competency in writing and editing
- Develop work that can be used as writing samples. *These are important to have when interviewing for internships/jobs. Every assignment in this class can be used as a writing sample*
- Provide hands-on experience in communications writing

Since an understanding of the news and business trends are imperative in the field of public relations, you will be asked to read and give summaries on news coverage of local, national and international significance. Assignments will be used to review discussions and readings. There will be numerous writing assignments, a midterm, and a final class project.

Attendance, participation, and professionalism will affect the final grade. All classroom assignments are designed to prepare students for the work environment and real-world professional challenges.

Students will be expected to know material covered in lectures. It will be critical to keep up with the direction regarding assigned readings, and on news here and around the world.

Please remember that in public relations you are frequently writing to a professional audience, and it's important to structure your writing style accordingly. Content, quality, and persuasiveness count. Check your facts and proofread your work.

**I am a stickler for typographical errors; they are a sign of carelessness and look unprofessional. Each spelling mistake or error in grammar is an automatic deduction on any assignment. Each punctuation error is also a deduction.**

### Online Classroom Environment

Please show up and be on time, even when calling in on Zoom. A portion of your grade is based on attendance and participation. If you miss a session, you will miss the interactions with me and with your classmates that will enhance your experience in the class.

### Tips for succeeding in the course

- *Asking questions and participation is strongly encouraged. Please contribute something, or ask a question -- communicators must communicate, so participate.*
- Proof and edit your work. Re-write, edit, and edit again. Follow AP Style. Use more than spell check. An innocent typo can make you look sloppy. *I take points off for typos and grammar mistakes in all assignments.*

- Keep up with the work.

### **Attendance**

Please make every effort to attend class. I take attendance at each class, and this is factored into your grade. Also, turn on your camera. I want to see all of us, especially since this class is online.

If you miss a class, please plan to get assignments from another student and complete them by the due date.

You must let me know ahead of time if you'll be absent. Please do not just skip class. Unexcused absences will adversely affect your final grade in the course.

Absences on the day of a test (midterm or final) or when a project is due will not be acceptable. No exceptions. You will be required to present medical or other emergency/official documentation explaining your absence before you will be permitted to make up an exam. Otherwise, making up an exam isn't possible.

### **Original Work**

Originality is the hallmark of the public relations industry. Anyone caught plagiarizing in this class will receive a grade of "F" for the assignment. [This includes ChatGPT. To maintain our culture of excellence and integrity, students are not to use AI assisted technology in the classroom.](#) Do not submit the same assignment for multiple classes. Do not submit an assignment that you used last semester for another class. That is unethical and is considered cheating.

Also, please do not write thank you notes to guest speakers when you weren't present to hear them speak. You will automatically get a zero (0) for the assignment.

### **Deadlines**

Public relations practitioners always meet deadlines. Assignments are due by the due date. *Late assignments will go down one full grade for every day it is late.*

### **Assignments and Breakdown of Grade**

Class participation and posting assignments on time are essential to obtain a good grade in this course. If you call in to class unprepared, or if you do not call in at all, or fail to complete all your assignments on time, it will be extremely difficult to get a grade above a C-.

A	100-94
A-	90-93
B+	89-88
B	87-83
B-	82-80
C+	79-78
C	77-73
C-	72-70
D+	69-68
D	67-64
F	below 64

This course consists of completing the following projects:

### **WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS**

Written assignments will vary and are designed to expose you to the public relations process and different writing skills.

### **ATTENDANCE**

- Attendance & Participation (
- If you miss class, you don't get the participation points

### **PROJECTS/EXAM**

- Midterm: AP Style Test
- Final Client Project (Group Project): Communications Plan for a Business

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

This course schedule is very likely to change throughout the semester. Any changes will be communicated in advance and adequate preparation time will be given. I will be bringing in Guest Speakers throughout the semester. Once they are confirmed, I'll let you know.

#### Week One

Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2023

##### WELCOME

- Introductions
- Course Overview
- Expectations and Outcomes
- Professional Goals
- Attendance and Participation
- Guest Speakers
- The Importance of Following the News
- AP Style
- Why Spelling & Grammar Count
- The Opportunity to Work with a Real Business
- What Would \*You\* Like to Learn in this Class?

Review in class: "9 Step Writing Process"

How to Write a Professional Email

Best Practices for Emails

Review in class: How to Write Better Business Documents

#### Week Two

Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

"60-Second" Presentations, live in class

Review in class: "How to write a Fact Sheet"

#### Week Three

Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

Review Fact Sheets in class

- I'll ask students to share their fact sheets and we can offer our constructive feedback

Review in class: "4 Essential Elements to Writing a Great Blog Post"

#### Week Four

Wednesday, Sept. 20, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

Review in class: The importance of having an outstanding resume. I will give you a formula that works.

Review in class: How to Create Engaging Social Media Content

Review "How to Write a Good Instagram Caption"

#### Week Five

Wednesday, Sept. 27, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

Review resumes in class. We will review each student's resume on a shared screen to offer our feedback on how to improve it. Everyone will participate (no exceptions)

Review in class: "The Anatomy of a Press Release" PPT

#### Week Six

Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

Review press releases in class. We will review each person's press release on a shared screen to offer our feedback on how to improve it. Everyone will participate (no exceptions)

#### Week Seven

Wednesday, Oct. 11

Discuss what's happening in the news

Review: AP Style Cheat Sheet (you will be tested on AP Style on the Midterm)

AP Writing Exercises in class

Week Eight

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

Review in class: "The Nitty Gritty of Pitching" PPT

Week Nine

Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

GUEST SPEAKER

Review in class: "How to Write Key Messages" PPT. This is about creating your own Personal Brand.

Week 10

Wednesday, Nov. 1, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

Review in class: Speech Structure PPT

GUEST SPEAKER

Week 11

Nov. 8, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

You will present your speeches during class time

Review in class: Crisis PR PPT

Week 12

Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2023

Discuss what's happening in the news

Review in class: "Will Your Cover Letter Get You the Job?" PPT

GUEST SPEAKER

Week 13

Wednesday, Nov. 22, 2023

NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)

Week 14

Wednesday, Nov. 29

Overview of Final Project

Teamwork time to prep for Final PR Presentations

Week 15

Wednesday, Dec. 6

Teamwork time to prep for Final PR Plan Presentations

Professor Burns will share her "Top 10 Tips in Business and in Life"

Week 16

Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec. 13 Your group will be presenting your Final PR Plan.

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Other Important Information. Please read it:

**Title IX Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners**

As an instructor, I am considered a Responsible Campus Partner ("RCP") under Loyola's **Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation** (located at [www.luc.edu/equity](http://www.luc.edu/equity)). While my goal is for you to be able to share information related to your life experiences through discussion and written work, I want to be transparent that as a RCP I am required to report certain disclosures of sexual misconduct (such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner and/or domestic violence, and/or stalking) to the University's **Title IX** Coordinator.

As an instructor, I also have a mandatory obligation under Illinois law to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect (<https://www.luc.edu/hr/legal-notices/mandatedreportingofchildabuseandneglect/>).

The purpose of these reporting requirements is for the University to inform students who have experienced sexual/gender-

based violence of available resources and support. Such a report **will not generate a report to law enforcement** (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Furthermore, the University's resources and supports are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. Please note that in certain situations, based on the nature of the disclosure, the University may need to take additional action to ensure the safety of the University community. If you have any questions about this policy, you may contact the **Office for Equity & Compliance** at [equity@luc.edu](mailto:equity@luc.edu) or 773-508-7766.

If you wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call **The Line** at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with additional resources as needed. More information can be found at [luc.edu/coalition](http://luc.edu/coalition) or [luc.edu/wellness](http://luc.edu/wellness).

#### **School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity**

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty. Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, using AI, and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments.

Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.
- Using ChatGPT or AI to complete your writing assignments.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at [https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml).

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction.

The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may

convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at: [http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicgrievance.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml) .

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations.

**Students with Special Accommodations:**

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Special Accommodations confidentially to me. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

**Respect for Diversity Statement:** It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students.

I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. It is critical that each class member show respect for all worldviews expressed in class. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

- Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
- Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
- Notify me of the issue through another source such as your academic advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue.

**Managing Life Crises and Finding Support:** Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (LUC.edu/csaa) for yourself or a peer in need of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf – just email me or schedule a meeting with me. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: LUC.edu/dos or LUC.edu/csaa; phone number 773-508-8840, email deanofstudents@luc.edu