OVERVIEW
Ask anyone working in public relations: good writing skills are important—really important. In this class, you’ll
- work to improve your writing and editing skills
- learn about a range of common public relations formats.
You will write some basic public relations material for an organization of your choice; you’ll practice writing and editing news releases and pitch letters on a deadline; you’ll develop information pieces and communication strategies for a social marketing campaign. If you take your work seriously, you will have a portfolio of professional quality examples at the end of this term.

THE IOWA DOZEN
A learning portfolio that reflects your understanding of the Iowa Dozen is a graduation requirement. This class will focus on these elements:
- write correctly and clearly
- conduct research and gather information responsibly
- edit and evaluate carefully
- demonstrate creativity and independence
- explore media institutions and practices

TEXTS AND MATERIALS
Readings posted on ICON
For reference: a dictionary and a usage guide such as Working with Words or When Words Collide
A USB storage device / Mac compatible
A pocket folder for handouts, assignments

ASSIGNMENTS / EVALUATION *
**Graded writing assignments** 75%
- Organization materials (15%)
  - Basic information pieces for an organization of your choice (bio, backgrounder, etc).
- Media relations I (20%)
  - Basic news releases, pitch letters, some on a deadline.
- Information / social marketing campaign materials (20%)
  - Research, write plan + prepare some communication tools for health/safety campaign.
- Media relations II (20%)
  - More news releases and pitches, media contact lists, social media, talking points, etc.

**Final portfolio** 20%
You will revise some of the major writing assignments you did during the semester. Your grade will reflect both the quality of your work and your editing/revising efforts. I will also take into account your “professionalism”—my evaluation of your work habits and attitude. “A” level professionals are ready with any materials or drafts assigned. They actively participate in class every day. They pay attention to details. They are not satisfied with first or second drafts; they ask for and cheerfully respond to suggestions for revision.

**PR/comm news** 5%
Find, share with class stories from PR / communication industry newspapers and blogs.

* If you are a graduate student you will have additional assignments and different evaluation criteria. See me for graduate version of syllabus.
**GRADING GUIDELINES**

Final grades will be computed using the scale below. You will receive a letter grade for each major assignment.

- 95-100 = A
- 90-94 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 83-86 = B
- 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 73-76 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 67-69 = D+
- 63-66 = D
- 60-62 = D-
- not turned in = 0

**EXPECTATIONS / CLASS STRUCTURE**

Typical class: we talk about a particular writing task, then you practice. In most cases, your in-class practice work will not be graded. Its purpose is to help you learn the formats you will use in your graded major assignments or to explore some other types of public relations communication—I'll review your work and talk with you about it rather than grade it. It is, however, an important part of the class.

Please make good use of the resources we have—nearly four hours a week in a well-equipped writing lab. My time and attention is another resource—keep me busy. I want to help you improve your writing, but you are responsible for showing me your work in progress, asking questions, and making a serious commitment to editing and revision.

I expect you to be here on time. Arriving late or leaving early may occasionally be unavoidable, but please don't make it a habit. If you have on-going conflict with this class, please resolve it or drop the class.

This will be an informal and, I hope, friendly and enjoyable class. Please respect your classmates, me, and the J-School by following these guidelines:

- no food or drink (except water)
- no cell phones (that means turned off, put away, no checking messages or texting)
- no ipods
- no e-mail, web surfing, Facebook, work for another class, etc.

Please note that this class assumes competence in grammar and language usage. I will help you as much as I can, but if you need to do some catch up work, I'll refer you to the Writing Center.

**CLASS POLICIES / ATTENDANCE, ASSIGNMENTS**

I will keep a record of your attendance and expect you to be here every day. When you miss class, you miss the work we do on those days. I understand that some time during the term you may be sick or have an important obligation that keeps you from class—you are responsible for making good decisions. If you must miss class, let me know in advance if you can. Please don't ask for my permission to miss class, leave early, or ask to have your absence excused. My job is to evaluate your work in class, not to evaluate your reasons for missing it. However, if you find that a serious health or other problem is affecting your work, please talk with me sooner rather than later—about how to handle course obligations. Also talk with me if a class meeting interferes with a religious observance. If you miss a lot of class—for whatever reason—your grade will be affected (see below).

Missing

- 5-6 classes will lower your final grade by 1/3 letter (ex: B+ to B)
- 7-8 classes, by 2/3 grade (ex: B+ to B-)
- 9-10 classes by a full grade (ex: B+ to C+)
- 11+ classes is grounds for failure.
Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date or as specified. Come to class with a completed assignment—not an unprinted computer document. Please staple assignments. Always keep a copy of your assignments. We all do our best, but papers or electronically submitted material can go astray; you are responsible for providing a copy if necessary.

Late work is not accepted except in cases of illness or other emergencies. If you miss class, you are still responsible for any schedule changes announced; be in touch with a classmate to find out what went on in your absence.

Please resolve computer / printing issues right away. If you are not a Mac user outside of class, figure out how to transfer work between lab and home or computer lab. Make use of MyFiles and the Locker feature on ICON; store your work on a storage device—not on classroom computers.

UNIVERSITY/CLAS POLICIES

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall or see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Electronic Communication University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (Operations Manual, III.15.2: Scroll down to k.11.)

Academic Fraud Plagiarism and any other activities when students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is a serious matter and is reported to the departmental DEO and to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum. Instructors and DEOs decide on appropriate consequences at the departmental level while the Associate Dean enforces additional consequences at the collegiate level. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

CLAS Final Examination Policies Final exams may be offered only during finals week. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. Students should not ask their instructor to reschedule a final exam since the College does not permit rescheduling of a final exam once the semester has begun. Questions should be addressed to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO (David Perlmuter, School of Journalism). Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS Handbook.

Accommodations for Disabilities A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Understanding Sexual Harassment Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment at www.uiowa.edu/~eod/policies/sexual-harassment-guide/index.html for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. (Operations Manual, Part IV, 16. See items e, h, and i.)
TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE*

Week of

20/25 Aug  Getting started / agency writing test
30 Aug / 1 Sept  Overview of PR writing / editing
6/8 Sept  Writing basic organization materials
13/15 Sept  continued  (organization materials due)*
20/22 Sept  Basic writing formats for mass media
27/29 Sept  continued
4/6 Oct  continued (possible in-class graded media writing)*
11/13 Oct  continued (possible in-class graded media writing)*
18/20 Oct  Writing to motivate / information campaign
25/27 Oct  continued
1/3 Nov  continued (information campaign materials due)*
8/10 Nov  Media relations II
15/17 Nov  continued
22/24 Nov  THANKSGIVING
29 Nov / 1 Dec  continued (media relations materials due)
6/8 Dec  Final portfolio work

Tues / 13 Dec  Final portfolio due  2:15

* Detailed schedules (approx monthly) will provide more information and may revise dates or order of topics.