OVERVIEW / COURSE OBJECTIVES
Ask anyone working in public relations or strategic communication: good writing skills are important—really important. In this class, you’ll
  o work to improve your writing and editing skills
  o learn about a range of common public relations / strategic comm formats including
    o backgrounders, bios, boilerplates
    o traditional and social media versions of news releases, pitch letters, and other media relations tools
    o op eds, advocacy messages, infographic
    o media contact list using CISIONPOINT
    o strategic communication campaign (audience research and creative)
  o become more comfortable with one of the challenges of writing in a professional setting—responding to criticism and shaping your text and format to meet the expectations of others.

WHAT TO EXPECT
Typical class: we talk about a particular writing task or strategic communication challenge, then you try it or explore further. In most cases, your in-class work will not be graded. Its purpose is to help you learn the formats you will use in your graded major assignments or to think through of the decisions that strategic communication pros must —I’ll review your work and talk with you about it rather than grade it. It is, however, an important part of the class. Sometimes you will work on your own, sometimes in small groups
Please make good use of the resources we have—three and a half 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.

THE IOWA DOZEN
We will focus on these elements:
  o write correctly and clearly
  o conduct research and gather information responsibly
  o edit and evaluate carefully
  o demonstrate creativity and independence
  o explore media institutions and practices

ASSIGNMENTS / EVALUATION
Graded writing assignments 325 pts
  Writing about an organization (100)
  Basic information pieces for an organization of your choice (bio, backgrounder, etc).
  Communicating with and through media (125)
  Basic news releases, pitch letters, some on a deadline, media talking points, media contact lists, email
  Writing to persuade / advocacy / issues (100)
  Message plan, opinion piece, visual/social information sharing

Client-based strategic communication project / individual and group / TBD 50 pts

Class participation and preparation 50 pts
  Being ready with drafts, practice writing, participating in group activities (points awarded most class sessions)

Final portfolio 100 pts
  Revisions of some assignments + a few new pieces.
GRADING GUIDELINES / 525 PTS TOTAL (A+ not used)

488 = A  
472 = A-  
457 = B+  
436 = B  
420 = B-  
404 = C+  
383 = C  
368 = C-  
352 = D+  
331 = D  
315 = D-  
<315 = F

TEXTS AND MATERIALS
Readings posted on ICON
A dictionary and a usage guide such as Working with Words or When Words Collide for reference

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. Let me know in advance when you can, but please note that all absences factor into your final grade as outlined below. 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 and attendance, please talk with me—sooner rather than later—about how to handle course obligations. Also talk with me if a class meeting or assignment interferes with a religious observance.

Missing
- 5 classes will lower your final grade by 1/3 letter (ex: B+ to B)
- 6 classes, by 2/3 grade (ex: B+ to B-)
- 7 classes by a full grade (ex: B+ to C+)
- 8+ classes is grounds for failure.

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. during our class time
- no or limited use of laptops or tablets---when you are looking at a screen, you are not connecting with me or your classmates

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.

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.

Representing the work of someone else as your own or getting credit in two classes for the same work is academic dishonesty. While I encourage you to discuss assignments with others, I expect that anything you hand in is your own. I expect that each person in a group has contributed equally and can provide a full description of his or her effort. Work for this class must be original—not revised versions of research or writing you have done or are doing for another class. Please talk with me if you have questions or want to discuss specific situations.
Administrative Home

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 Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/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, k.11).

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.

Academic Honesty

All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College’s Code of Academic Honesty: “I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty.” Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies

The final examination schedule for each class is announced around the fifth week of the semester by the Registrar. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the dates and times of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar’s web site.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

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 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. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Note</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 / 22 Jan</td>
<td>Getting started / agency writing test</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 / 29 Jan</td>
<td>Considering PR writing / editing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 / 5 Feb</td>
<td>Writing basic organization materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 / 12 Feb</td>
<td>continued (organization materials due)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 / 19 Feb</td>
<td>Media basics /news releases, pitch letters, fact sheets</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 / 26 Feb</td>
<td>continued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 / 5 Mar</td>
<td>continued (in-class graded media writing)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 / 12 Mar</td>
<td>Researching media / media contact lists</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 / 26 Mar</td>
<td>Sharing news</td>
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<td>31 Mar / 2 Apr</td>
<td>Advocacy writing / issues writing to persuade</td>
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<td>7 / 9 Apr</td>
<td>continued</td>
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<td>14 / 16 Apr</td>
<td>continued</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 / 23 Apr</td>
<td>Strategic communication project/ audience and creative</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 / 30 Apr</td>
<td>continued</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 / 7 May</td>
<td>Final portfolio due</td>
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*Detailed schedules on ICON will provide more information and may revise due dates or order of topics.