About the Instructor

Frank Durham, Ph.D.

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**E-mail:** frank-durham@uiowa.edu

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Academic Course Home</th>
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| College of Liberal Arts and Sciences—School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/ |
| **Department Chair:** David Ryfe  
**E-mail:** david-ryfe@uiowa.edu  
**Phone:** 319-384-3383 |

Course Goal and Objectives

This interactive course will stress the communication fundamentals of clarity, concision, and cohesion. You will learn to target their market, sharpen their message, and structure and shape their communication for maximum impact. While refreshing your knowledge of mechanics (grammar, punctuation), you will progress through a series of more ambitious assignments, both individual and group, that you can tailor toward a focus on multi-platform communication for various professions—including public relations, marketing, health communication, and other careers in strategic communication. You will also hone editing skills that they can apply to the work of others as well as their own.

Media/System Requirements

This class will meet virtually using Zoom, a virtual conferencing software. Additional information is posted on the ICON homepage.

Listed below are the media/system requirements applicable to this course:

- **System requirements.** Computer with high-speed Internet access (wired preferred), USB headset w/ microphone and webcam.
- **A thumb drive or cloud folder** to store coursework on.
- **Need Technical Support?** Contact the Division of Continuing Education technical support staff at dce-techsupport@uiowa.edu.

Required Textbook/Media

The following two required books have been ordered through IOWA BOOK, 8 S. Clinton St, Iowa City, IA 52240 • (319) 337-4188. They are also available on-line:


The following required resource is available online only:
• AP Style Quizzes On-line (Order at: https://www.apstylebook.com/apbookstore/invoice.php?pid=APQ=917360
Note: You must have these books on hand during live class sessions in order to complete in-class assignments.

Course Structure
Writing for strategic communication successfully depends on connecting ideas to actions for your target readers. That means understanding how to use a persuasive outline, how to apply a range of document formats, and how to employ sound mechanics with consistent editorial style all at once. By developing a thorough understanding of these skills in this course, you will be able to effect organizational strategies by turning key ideas into observable actions by your intended readers. In our weekly workshop meetings, we will review basic principles of grammar and style, while learning to write mission statements, fliers, fact sheets, biographical sketches, news releases, media pitches, speeches, multimedia presentations, public service announcements, letters to the editor, and op-eds. To test these skills in a real-world context, the final exam will be based on a professional agency entrance test.

Course Policies
• Attendance is essential, because all work will be completed in class.
• No make-up assignments except in documented or pre-arranged cases.
• Reading responses are due in the appropriate ICON Dropbox folder before class. These one-page, bulleted summaries of the assigned readings should conclude with one-to-three questions you want answered in class. They will be graded on a pass-fail basis.
• Missed classes or late work. In-class exercises and quizzes cannot be made up. No extensions will be granted for short writing assignments. Extensions for longer work are possible only under genuinely extenuating circumstances, which must be documented. Late assignments will be marked down; none will be accepted late unless you have notified the instructor in advance with an explanation; and except for truly extraordinary circumstances, no assignments will be accepted at all more than one week after the original due date.

Course Work
• Writing Assignments
Because this is a workshop, our writing assignments will be completed in class. The 10 graded assignments are labeled (below.) We will complete other exercises for practice and review.

• Reading Responses (weekly):
These one-page, bulleted summaries of the assigned readings will be due before class in the ICON dropbox I have set up for each class meeting. In addition to your summaries, please write two questions you would like answered during class. We will address your questions in our discussions.
Final exercise: Agency test

Most professional strategic communication agencies administer a multi-part writing test to job applicants. We will take a version of this test at the end of the semester to familiarize you with its format and contents, as well as to assess your learning in this course.

Grading Criteria

Final course grades will be assessed based on the student’s performance in the following items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of final grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graded writing assignments (10 @ 5 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading responses (10 @ 2 points each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance/participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exercise: Agency test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final course grades will be assigned as follows:

- 94-100% = A
- 90-93% = A-
- 86-89% = B+
- 83-85% = B
- 80-82% = B-
- 76-79% = C+
- 73-75% = C
- 70-72% = C-
- 65-69% = D+
- 60-64% = D
- > 60% = F

Email:

Email is the official method of communication for this course. Students can expect to receive weekly communications from the instructor (via email) introducing assigned course-work. Students are expected to check their university email account frequently.

The course structure described above assumes that students have basic computer skills and are knowledgeable about the various programs and hardware they will need to use during this session (e.g. Microsoft Word). For information and computer support geared toward distance education students, access:

- the Technical Support page - [http://distance.uiowa.edu/article/technical-support](http://distance.uiowa.edu/article/technical-support)
- the Student Guide to ICON - [https://icon.uiowa.edu/help/students/](https://icon.uiowa.edu/help/students/)
Course Calendar

Each Week:
- Join virtual class meeting
- Upload reading response and completed in-class assignment to ICON Dropboxes

Jan. 25  First day

Part 1
- Course overview
  - Syllabus and course readings
  - Exercises
  - Reading responses
- Introductions
- Personal/professional goal statements
- In-class discussion: Exercises on p. 60.


Written work explained on Feb. 1, but due on Feb. 8:

Short-form persuasion

Part One

Fact Sheets
- Examples:
  - bp.com (See “BP at a glance.”)
Part Two: Bio Sketches—(Graded exercise 1)

- AP Style quiz
- Grammar Quiz [http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/)
- Draft a fact sheet for your new position at BP. (See “careers at BP” at BP.com. (You may choose another present or future position with another company.)
- Graded exercise: Then write a 200-word bio sketch announcing your appointment to the position.

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Feb. 15

Part One: Leads and News Releases

- AP Style quiz
- Grammar Quiz [http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/)
- Leads:
  - The inverted pyramid revisited: organizing your story
    - Writing a list
    - The semantic map
  - Writing the summary lead

Part Two—News Releases (cont.)

Feb. 22  News Releases (cont.)
Part One
  o  AP Style quiz
  o  Grammar Quiz http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar

  Product release—(Graded exercise 3)

Part Two  News Releases (cont.)
  o  Exercise: Lifestyle, trend and survey releases (Handbook, pp. 25-26)

Feb. 29  News Releases (cont.)
Part One
  o  AP Style quiz
  o  Grammar Quiz http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar
  o  Exercise: Localizing a national release (Handbook, pp. 26-28)

Part Two
  o  Graded exercise 4: Quotations (Handbook, pp. 30-32)

March 7
Part One
  Assessing media relations: PR Newswire discussion exercise (in syllabus)

Part Two
  Discussion exercise: Tapping emotion, not cognition: “Upworthy” and “click-bait”
    o  AP Style quiz
    o  Grammar Quiz http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/

  Listen to:
    o  http://www.onthemedia.org/tags/upworthy/

  Visit:
    o  http://www.upworthy.com
Then identify examples of “click-bait” on these sites:
- nytimes.com
- nola.com
- huffingtonpost.com
- press-citizen.com

Answer these questions for in-class discussion:
- How does click-bait work to target intended readers?
- as persuasion?
- What is the emotional element versus the cognitive effect in stage one of the behavioral framework? Give examples.
- How likely is click-bait to reflect a strategic approach to communication with targeted publics?
- How would you know? Or could you know?

Exercise: Write “click-bait” leads for three of the news releases you have drafted to date.

Spring break — March 13-20

March 21 Writing the pitch
Part One
- AP Style quiz
- Grammar Quiz http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/
- Conciseness exercise 1

- Handbook, chapter 3, pp. 49-64.
- Exercise: Writing a persuasive pitch

Part Two
Making the pitch: Researching venues
Cisionpoint.com
- AP Style quiz
- Grammar Quiz http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/
March 28  (Graded exercise 5) Writing and Presenting Speeches
   o  AP Style quiz
   o  Grammar Quiz http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/
   •  Handbook, chapter five: pp. 85-106

April 4  (Graded exercise 6) Writing and formatting the Powerpoint presentation
   o  AP Style quiz
   o  Grammar Quiz http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/
   •  Handbook, pp. 107-121.

April 11 (Graded exercise 7) Writing for broadcast: Public Service Announcements
   o  AP Style quiz
   o  Grammar Quiz http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/
   •  Handbook, pp. 134-139

Graded exercise: PSAs

April 18  (Graded exercise 8) Writing for the Internet
   o  AP Style quiz
   o  Conciseness exercise 3

   o  Discussion exercise: Web site analyses—How do working Web sites conform to the criteria in the text?
   o  Discussion exercise: Case 41, pp. 239-240.
April 25  Responsive Writing
   o  AP Style quiz
   o  Grammar Quiz http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/
   •  Handbook, pp. 243-262

   Graded exercise 9: Writing the letter to the editor (75 words).

May 2  Graded exercise 10: Writing the op-ed (600 words)
   Last class meeting

Due by May 9. Final exam: Ketchum Writing Test. Note: This test is set up on ICON as a timed exercise. You may complete the test on your own schedule prior to midnight on May 9. Please upload your work to the dropbox that is set up for it.
Grading Rubrics - Public relations writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Structure and Content</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral framework applied correctly</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format (based on example)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. Errors to avoid</th>
<th>Points (per error)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax or word choice</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact error</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Unlimited

Exercise: PRNewswire analysis

As you read and review the articles that you find in the news, write out the answers to these questions. You will refer to them in our classroom discussion and turn them in afterwards.

The goal of this exercise will be to compare an original news release to a resulting news story covered in the press. We will search PRNewswire.com for originating releases. Then we will search the Web for related news stories for comparison. We will be interested in changes to the themes and frames reflected in the news as a way to understand the relationship of strategic relations to journalism.

Instructions

You will write a report on your findings following these steps:

- Using PRNewswire.com, identify a current news release from a non-profit or corporate organization.
- Search keywords from that release in Google to locate a related news story.
- Provide the author’s name(s), date, and newspaper or Web site name at the top of your written response.
• Answer the following questions:

1. What is the dominant frame or theme of the news story?

2. Are there other, emerging themes in the coverage? If so, list them.

3. Reporters Key differences in the way that the news is reported. They propose observing five points:

   (a) Who is/is not quoted based a comparison to the original release?

   (b) Who is/is not named by title?

   (c) Where are those cited positioned in the news reports?

   (d) Whose ideas are supported reinforced? or questioned?

   (e) Which original details are included or excluded?1

Policies & Resources

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 with the course instructor privately in the instructor’s office to make particular arrangements. See http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty
All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS 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 by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. 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 date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

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.