**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION WRITING**

11 AM – 12:15 PM Mondays Wednesdays at W336 AJB

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**About the Instructor**

**Frank Durham, Ph.D.**  
Campus address: E330 Adler  
Journalism Building  
Phone: 319-335-3362  
Drop-in Hours: Thursday—9-noon (or by appointment)  
E-mail: frank-durham@uiowa.edu

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**Academic Course Home**

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences—School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/  
Department Chair: David Ryfe, Ph.D.  
E-mail: david-ryfe@uiowa.edu  
Phone: 319-384-3383

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**Course Goal and Objectives**

This studio writing course will stress the writing fundamentals of clarity, concision, and cohesion. You will learn to target your readers, sharpen your messaging, and structure your writing for maximum impact. While refreshing your knowledge of mechanics (editing, grammar, punctuation, style), you will progress through a series of more ambitious assignments based on persuasive rhetoric that you will be able to apply immediately to various communication platforms in public relations- and business-related professions.

In our twice weekly meetings, we will review basic principles of grammar, while learning to write fact sheets, biographical sketches, news releases, media pitches, speeches, cover letters, multimedia presentations, public service announcements, letters to the editor, and op-eds. To assess these skills in a real-world context, the final writing exercise will be based on a professional agency entrance test.
Learning objectives

Students who take this course will learn to understand that clear, concise, correct writing is at the heart of strategic communication, and that effective writing requires a knowledge and achievement of the highest, professionally-accepted standards in all work.

**Learning Objective 1.** Students will demonstrate the ability to gather factual story elements, and to evaluate and express them in logical, persuasive narrative forms using multiple media.

**Learning Objective 2.** Students will display the ability to access and analyze data, report facts persuasively and accurately, and to research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards.

**Learning Objective 3.** Students will demonstrate the ability to apply above concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media.

**Learning Objective 4:** Students will learn to write persuasive documents that project evaluable communications outcomes.

For more information about the SJMC assessment plan, see: https://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/sjmc-assessment-plan

Required Textbook/Media

The following book has been ordered through the bookstore at the IMU. It is also available on-line:

Course schedule

Aug. 26  First day of class.

Aug. 28  **No class. I will be out of town.** Take notes on the following reading assignment for discussion on Sept. 4.


Sept. 2  Labor Day

Sept. 4  Handbook — Intro., chapter 1, pp. xiii-12.

- Grammar exercise
- The behavioral framework explained.
- Our style guide
- Exercise: Writing the fact sheet and bio sketch. **Grade 1**


In-class exercise: Case 5: Alcohol Awareness Month (Part A), pp. 57-58.
Sept. 11 Leads and News Releases

Grammar exercise
Leads:
  o The inverted pyramid revisited: organizing your story
    ▪ Writing a list
    ▪ The semantic map
  o Writing the summary lead Grade 2

Sept. 16 Appointment release—Revise your bio sketch as an appointment release (peer edit) (discussion board)

Sept. 18 Product release Grade 3

Sept. 23 Guest speaker: Matt de la Pena — social media and public relations

Sept. 25 News Releases (cont.)
  ▪ Grammar exercise.

Sept. 30 The flier: 1 & 4.
  ▪ Grammar exercise.
  Exercise: The flier

Oct. 2 Exercise: Zappala—Writing for on-line content (See pdf. on ICON).
  Exercise: The Red Cross’s corporate identity — Grade 5
  Grammar exercise.

Oct. 7 Guest speaker
Oct. 9 Searching for professional positions in public relations:  
The O'Dwyer guide — www.odwyerpr.com

Oct. 14 Guest speaker

Oct. 16 Writing the pitch Grade 6  
Grammar exercise  
Handbook, chapter 3, pp. 49-64.  
Exercise: Writing a persuasive pitch

Oct. 21 Guest speaker (Absences count double)

Oct. 23 Writing and Presenting Speeches Grade 7  
Grammar exercise  
Handbook, chapter five: pp. 85-106

Oct. 28 Speeches (cont.)  
Grammar exercise

Oct. 30 Writing and formatting the Powerpoint presentation  
Handbook, pp. 107-121.

Nov. 7 Powerpoint presentations Grade 8

Nov. 9 Writing for broadcast: Public Service Announcements Grade 9

Nov. 14 PSA presentations
Nov. 16  Writing for the Internet — **Grade 10**

- Grammar exercise
- “On-line Writing and Communications.”

**Nov. 25, 27—Thanksgiving break**

Dec. 2 — Writing for the Internet (cont.)

Dec. 4 — Last day of class. In-class writing exercise.
How to stay in touch with SJMC

FACEBOOK:  https://www.facebook.com/UISJMC/
INSTAGRAM:  https://www.instagram.com/uiowa_sjmc/
TWITTER:  https://twitter.com/UIOWA_SJMC
LINKEDIN:  https://www.linkedin.com/school/19128785  (Shortened version)
OR  

Course Policies

- Attendance is essential, because all work will be completed during our scheduled class time.
- No make-up assignments except in documented or pre-arranged cases.
- Reading responses are due in the appropriate Canvas dropbox (“assignment”) folder before class. These one-page, double-spaced, bulleted summaries of the assigned readings should conclude with two questions you want answered in class. They will be graded on a pass-fail basis.

Coursework

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

- Final exercise: Agency writing
  This is not a test, but a timed exercise. Most professional strategic communication agencies administer a multi-part writing exercise to job applicants. In our last class meeting, you will write a news release.
Grading Criteria

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>% of final grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graded writing assignments</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance/participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exercise: Agency writing exercise</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final course grades will be assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percent Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>65-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&gt; 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading Rubric — Public relations writing

1. Structure and Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</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>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Errors to avoid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error</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>-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unlimited</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Absences and Attendance
Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All absence policies, however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, including Holy Day obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences). Students may use this absence form to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused (https://clas.uiowa.edu/sites/default/files/ABSENCE%20EXPLANATION%20FORM2019.pdf).

Each unexcused absence will reduce your attendance grade (10% of your course grade) by one percentage point. Absences on the day of a scheduled guest speaker count double.

Missed and late work. In-class exercises and quizzes cannot be made up. Extensions for longer work are possible only under genuinely extenuating circumstances, which must be documented. In the event of an extension, late assignments will be marked down by one letter grade per day below the assigned grade. None will be accepted late unless you have notified the instructor in advance with an explanation. Except for truly extraordinary circumstances, no assignments will be accepted at all more than one week after the original due date.

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code).
Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student is then responsible for discussing specific accommodations with the instructor. More information is at https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/.

Administrative Home of the Course
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and related policies. Other colleges may have different policies. CLAS policies may be found here: https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Communication and the Required Use of UI Email
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to the UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Complaints
Students with a complaint about an academic issue should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the Chair of the department or program offering the course; students may next bring the issue to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. For more information, see https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities.

Final Examination Policies
The final exam schedule is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. Visit https://registrar.uiowa.edu/final-examination-scheduling-policies.
**Nondiscrimination in the Classroom**

UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (diversity.uiowa.edu).

**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 must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, please see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.
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