Strategic Communication Writing

The University of Iowa
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
The Graduate College
JMC: 5400: EXW Fall 2020
Strategic Communication Writing
Course Instructor: Amy Jo Reimer-Myers

Class meeting times: Thursdays 5:30 – (approx.) 8:00 pm CST
Off 11.26 for Thanksgiving Break and 12.3; last class and final projects due 12.10
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Subscribe to Course text list here - https://www.remind.com/join/sc5400
Course Access: Log into Iowa Courses Online (ICON) using your HAWK ID and password
http://icon.uiowa.edu/index.shtml

Course Description, Goals and Learning Objectives:
This course is an applied writing skills laboratory. We will cover major strategic communication tools for
multiple platforms and audiences. We will focus on writing clearly and concisely, and you will learn to
target your message, and structure your writing for maximum impact. The skills of writing are learned by
doing; you will have ample opportunities to learn by writing in nearly every class. By the end of this
course, you will be able to: quickly and correctly produce written materials required for public relations,
advertising, and marketing communications; integrate strategy into communication pieces to target
your messages to diverse publics; professionally present material across a wide variety of
communication platforms. You will develop your skill set for writing mechanics, AP Style, and editing.
Additionally, you will develop client-ready samples to add to your professional portfolio.

Media/System Requirements: Technical requirements for completing University of Iowa online classes
that require a student-provided personal computer. Sufficient technology and internet access is
required to complete online classes when you take a course at the University of Iowa. While tablets,
smartphones and other mobile devices may allow for some completion of coursework, they are not
guaranteed to work in all areas. Please ensure you have a Windows or Mac based computer available to
complete coursework in the event that your selected mobile device does not meet the needs of the
course. Listed below are the media/system requirements applicable to the course: System requirements
– Computer with internet access and a sound card. See specific requirements here,

The latest version of Adobe Reader and the Microsoft Silverlight Player must be installed in your
computer in order to get access to course materials posted on ICON, such as pre-recorded lectures and
lesson study guides. Computer with broadband access (desktop, laptop vs. tablet or smartphone). A
wired Ethernet connection to the internet is very strongly suggested. Wireless, or cellphone data may
experience connection problems., Android and iOS operating systems are not fully supported at this
time. Students who need assistive technologies will have different computer and technology requirements. Please check with your Student Disability Services to determine the requirements for the specific technologies needed to support your online classes.

For questions with virtual classrooms (i.e. Zoom) or UICapture (Panopto), please contact Continuing Education Technical Support (319)335-3952. Need help with ICON or your HawkID? Please contact the ITS Help Desk at 319-384-HELP

**Required Textbook/Media:**

The first required book [https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/stratcommwriting/](https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/stratcommwriting/) (Free open source text)

The second required book is *The AP Stylebook, 55th Edition.* The ISBN for the 55th edition of the AP Stylebook is 978-0-917360-69-5 and it is available now via [this link](https://www.betterlesson.com/).  


There will additional readings provided on ICON. Please review your assignment list and syllabus to be prepared for each class.

This course is being offered over the Web as a Distance Education offering. I will be teaching the course at the University of Iowa Mary and John Pappajohn Center located at 1200 Grand Avenue downtown Des Moines. If you are interested in attending in person, please be in touch with me. You are welcome to join.

We will have speakers throughout the semester. Students are expected to interact with the speakers, ask meaningful questions and prepare (research the organization) prior to the speaker’s presentation. Those students attending in person will have a networking opportunity with the speakers.

We will begin class promptly at 5:30 p.m. Our class will feature lectures, nightly writing assignments, peer-reviews, and group discussion. Each student will select a client and create portfolio-ready work for the client. Each student will develop their own company and brand.

The syllabus has all the assignments, reading chapters and due dates listed. The same information is also on our ICON page. I want to let you know that it is possible that dates and assignments may change due to the needs of the class. You will not be surprised by any changes. All changes will reflect the needs of our class and be communicated a week prior to a due date. Should our class need more time on a particular topic and assignment, our due dates will change to accommodate student needs when possible.

Students joining our weekly class will login to the course site on ICON to access the course materials (syllabus, assignments, schedules), and the discussion forum. For details of the course assignments and activities, consult your syllabus. All the assignment and due dates are listed on both the syllabus and in ICON. Course content consist of the textbooks, additional articles, and several websites. Students are expected to visit the syllabus and course page regularly to: access assigned course materials (posted on the “Modules” page) and journal articles. Please review the course homepage regularly for any updates or course announcements. All assignments will be submitted prior to or on the due date in ICON. Late assignments will receive a grade lower for each day the assignment is late.
Assignments and Reading:

**August 27**

**Read:** Part 1. “Writing for Strategic Communication Industries”

**Assignment: Research Brand and Writing.** Select a large company (Fortune 500) and one of the company's specific products or services. Develop a document that presents the following information: 1) Company name, brand name, product or service name and details. 2) Review the company's brand manual regarding the logo and requirements including color(s). Summarize brand and logo requirements; 3) Capture the boilerplate statement; 4) Share the brand and company positioning statement(s). If you are using one product, please be clear about your focus; 5) What are the product or services USP? 6) What position does the company and its product or service have in the market? 7) List at least three of the target market's (demographics, psychographics, etc.) 7) How many platforms do they appear? Please list them; 8) What is consistent in every platform and message? 9) What are they presently focused in communicating (What campaign or issue are they focused on communicating?) 10) Other insights?

**September 3**

**Read:** Parts 2 and 3. “Writing for Strategic Communication Industries”

Read: "Finding your Brands Voice" By Harriet Cummings
Read: https://creately.com/blog/diagrams/what-is-a-situation-analysis/

Client company pitches

**Research and Brand Writing Analysis Due**

**Assignment: Brand Development, Client Selection and Situation Analysis**

1) Develop your own brand and company.
2) Design your logo and develop a boilerplate for your company.
3) Client selection. Is there an organization, start-up, or business with whom you would like to work? Review the clients presented and choose the one that will be your client for the semester. Review their organization, advertising, social media platforms and products/services. Create a situation analysis of your findings. Please create a SWOT analysis to complement our situation analysis. The situation analysis will be added to your final portfolio.

**September 10**

**Read:** Parts 4 and 5. “Writing for Strategic Communication Industries”

Des Moines Register Speakers
Brand Development, Client Selection and Situation Analysis Due

Assignment: Client Research and Letter

1) Develop a business letter using your new brand and boilerplate. 2) The purpose of your letter is to present yourself to your client and ask to be their public relations consultant or communications agency. 3) In the context of your letter, develop a paragraph about why they should choose your company and what you can do to help them. 4) Use the documents you are required to create for our class as some of the key deliverables for your new client. 5) Include a paragraph or two about the research you have done on the competition/industry.

September 17

AP Style Quiz – in class

Due: Client Research and Letter

Assignment: Media releases & media advisories = Media Kit

This assignment will be due in two weeks.

Writing media releases is one of the most essential communication skills. Crafting bold headlines and compelling leads is a critical to getting your client noticed and published! In this assignment you will create a media release and media advisory for your client. This assignment allows you to begin to build a portfolio media kit. The other documents your media kit will contain should be: 1) company history, 2) boilerplate statement, 3) company facts, 4) branding information and logo guidelines, 5) company management, 6) Lists of where the media can find your client company website, social media etc., 7) create a document which conveys information about your company spokesperson and contact policy, 8) provide product/service information, previous advertisements or previous media coverage. This is a kit will be added to as the semester proceeds and you develop more information you want the media to have on hand. It will serve as a portfolio.

September 24

Read: “How to Attract Attention with a Feature Article,” by Mark Nowlan https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/166662
Read: Parts 6 and 7. “Writing for Strategic Communication Industries”
Assignment: Feature Story for your client. Develop a feature story about your company 500 – 600 words. Each student will present the story as if you were submitting it to the media in class next week. List the media, editor/reporter, platform, and pitch strategy for this piece. Characteristics of a feature article are by definition: A special story/article in a newsletter or magazine; shows human-interest rather than straight news. A feature is a creative article that deals with real events, issues, and trends; but unlike straight news articles, it places emphasis on the people involved rather than on the facts of news. This should be factual but will also include the following: 1) A creative lead (soft lead); 2) Quotes (a minimum of two interviews) and 3) Complement the company brand and product goals.

October 1

Read: Parts 8 and 9. “Writing for Strategic Communication

Media releases, alerts, and Media Kits Due
Feature Story Due

October 8

Read: Parts 10 and 11. “Writing for Strategic Communication

Article: https://contently.net/2016/04/05/resources/career-advice/journalism/editors-tell-all-what-subject-lines-work-best/

Article: “& Essential Elements of a Crisis Plan,”

Article: “The Best (and Most Practical Tips to Improve Your Crisis Management,”

Article: https://www.wsj.com/articles/coronavirus-emails-from-companies-may-not-be-calming-to-customers-11584957184

Article: https://today.tamu.edu/2020/04/06/how-to-talk-to-employees-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/
Assignment: Crisis Materials. Planning is an essential skill for a communications practitioner. We all must be prepared: as you know, pandemics happen! What kind of crisis could be lurking for your client? How will you advise them if it happens? What materials do they need to have ready to act?

Create the following materials for your client. These materials can be added to your media kit. 1) Create a situation analysis defining the present or potential crisis. 2) Develop a media release/alert as the first piece of communication to all those who need to be aware. Remember to provide a quote from an industry leader or company official; 3) Develop a holding statement; 4) Create a list of those who need to receive the release. List of the target groups/investors/community; 5) Create a communication outline of what needs to be done; and 5). List the media and platforms where your information should be sent. Would you consider a wire service? 6) Make sure all your materials are properly branded.

Read: Part 12. “Writing for Strategic Communication Industries.”
Read: "17 Ideas for More Compelling Presentations"
Read: [https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffschmitt/2013/07/16/10-keys-to-writing-a-speech/#67ee309b4fb7](https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffschmitt/2013/07/16/10-keys-to-writing-a-speech/#67ee309b4fb7)

Assignment: Speech writing: You will be assigned to write and present your own three-minute speech. All speeches will be presented during our next class. Your speech could be a part of your crisis plans. Your speech could be in response to your board of directors or another group of your choosing. Other topics will also be discussed in class.

Below are some elements your speech should address:

Create a short document acknowledging the following:

a) What groups: To whom are you speaking – audience or target market, the public, board of directors? How do you need to speak to them? What words or terms are important?

b) Where does it fit into the organizational objectives/strategy? In other words, why are you choosing to address this group? How does it affect the company?

c) What has happened? Why is it important for these people to know what you are speaking about? When did you know it? What are you doing about it? How is this crisis/situation being managed?

d) Any additional context or information?
**October 22**

Read: New York Times ICON:

Read: Chapters 30 – 40,
ICON:

**Crisis Materials Due**

**Speech Writing Due – Presented in class**

**October 29**

Read: https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo/why-search-engine-marketing-is-necessary

Read: Chapter 41 – 46, “Everybody Writes,” Ann Handley

**Assignment: Social Media Review.** Choose a website page that you would like to analyze for search engine optimization. You may select a competitor of your client if you like. Using the guidelines discussed in our class and read about, create a specific “to do” list for the site, utilizing keywords and phrases. The list should contain at least five specific directives the unique page for SEO. When you submit your final product be sure to link to the page you are reviewing.

**Guidelines**

- Engaging with the market
- Being relevant and aware of the latest trends
- Use visual content
- Branding
- Networking/Building a community
- Consistency

**November 5**

Read: “Brand Tone of Voice,” Judy Delin in Icon

ICON: “Campaign Best Practices,”
https://uiowa.instructure.com/courses/141875/files/folder/Documents?
ICON:

**Social Media Review Due**

**Assignment: Client Social Media.**
Determine two or three platforms that will best serve your client. Create two different media posts on each that will accomplish the
following for your client. 1) Maintain brand and product/service consistency; 2) Inform, sell or persuade the reader; 3) Fit the target market (define those you are hoping will respond or take action from this post); 4) Use visual content; 5) Could these social media posts be expanded thematically in the future – campaign? 6) List SEO targets, keywords, etc.

**November 12**


**ICON:**

**Client Social Media Due**

**Assignment: Advertising Collateral Materials Brochure** –
As a consultant to your client, determine the advertising needs. Does your client company need a brochure, a banner ad on a key site, expanded presence on social media platforms (LinkedIn, Amazon; Etsy, etc.)? Write and design an advertising collateral element(s) for your client. Please address how frequently this advertising messaging will run and where it will appear (In a newspaper an example would be, back cover, or a half page right-facing four-color ad on page 14, or right column banner on main webpage.) We will review advertising rate cards in class. Present a graphically designed ad or collateral piece using any number of online programs (Canva)

**November 19**

**Read:** Chapter 8 – 18, “Everybody Writes,” Ann Handley

**In Class: Special Assignment:** Publicity or Advertising needs for your client. Now that you have served as your client’s consultant for more than 14 weeks, please review your portfolio of materials and develop and write unique piece that could help your client accomplish something specific: 1) sell more product; 2) develop a blog; 3) design new social media posts on a new platform, 4) create a media release about a new company development, etc. You are the expert and you will make your recommendation to your client. Here is what your piece must accomplish: 1) State your goal; 2) List the platform, newspaper, media where you will place your work; 3) How long will your piece appear? 4) Is there a way you can measure the success of your efforts?

**December 3**

**Advertising Collateral Materials/Brochure Due**

**Portfolio material updated and reviewed. Portfolio elements:**
1. Client letter and research
2. Situation analysis
3. Media kit: Company history; Boilerplate statement; Company facts, logo guidelines and company management (bios) information; advertising and social media list and examples; media contact information; media releases, and media alerts.

4. Feature story

5. Crisis information

6. Speech copy

7. Social media ads/posts

8. Advertising collateral material

9. In class advertising or publicity piece (optional)

December 10

Final Class portfolio and final materials due
Class presentation and discussion

Grading Criteria: The percentage grade of the class is distributed equally between the following categories:

Attendance/participation: 20 percent; Written work 80 percent.

Final course grades will be assigned as follows: A to A- (100-90%) B+ to B- (89-80%) C+ to C- (79-70%) D+ to D- (69-60%) F (Below 60%)

Media/System Requirements: Computer with high speed Internet access, a camera and microphone.

Need technical support? Contact the Division of Continuing Education technical support staff at dce-techsupport@uiowa.edu.

Class expectations, synchronous and asynchronous and early wrap-ups:
Most synchronous sessions (almost all our class meetings): As an instructor, I will try to keep sessions interactive, lively, and engaged. Our face-to-face time will focus on a short lecture, class discussions of reading materials and interactions with peers, and industry expert speakers throughout the semester. 

That means that you are responsible to work through class material on your own time and come to class prepared to discuss what has been assigned. This course requires high levels of attention, motivation, and the initiative to learn independently. We will all work to create a comfortable environment where we can speak honestly and support one another. Frequently, we will wrap-up early (prior to our 8 p.m. conclusion). The purpose of this is to allow you to begin your assignments and apply what we have discussed. I have found that the most successful students schedule and use the full “class time” during their weekly schedule to work on class assignments. You may also find it beneficial to set up times online to meet with one another and discuss content and plans for your assignments.

Course Policies Online Classroom Conduct: No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated during this course. Critical thought and discussion is encouraged; however, classroom civility is required at all times. The instructor reserves the right to delete any message board post that includes racist/sexist/bigoted language or personal attacks against another class member.
**Student Support:** This course assumes students have basic computer skills and knowledge of the various programs and hardware you need to use during this session (e.g., Microsoft Word). For information and computer support geared toward distance education students, access: *These CLAS policy and procedural statements have been summarized from the web pages of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the University of Iowa Operations Manual. 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 [https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook](https://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**
The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which includes but is not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). 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. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See [https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/](https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/) for 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 ([https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code)): "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 [https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/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. **This course will not have a final exam. There will be a final portfolio of work due on the last night of class.**

**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/.

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.

Resources for Students
Students will find the Writing Center and the Speaking Center very useful for this course; the Tutor Iowa site is also very valuable for students seeking extra help:
Writing Center: https://writingcenter.uiowa.edu/
Speaking Center: https://speakingcenter.uiowa.edu/
Tutor Iowa: https://tutor.uiowa.edu/