Strategic Communication Writing
The University of Iowa
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
The Graduate College
JMC: 5400: EXW Spring 2021
Strategic Communication Writing

Course Instructor: Amy Jo Reimer-Myers

Class meeting times: Mondays 5:30 – (approx.) 8:00 pm CST Course meeting dates:
1-25; 2-1; 2-8; 2-15; 2-22; 3-1; 3-8; 3-15; 3-22; 3-29; 4-5; 4-12; 4-19; 4-26; 5-3; 5-10

Phone: (515) 333-1225
Email: amyjo-reimer@uiowa.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

DEO: David Ryfe (319)335-3486
Email: David-Ryfe@uiowa.edu

Course Access: Log into Iowa Courses Online (ICON) using your HAWK ID and password http://icon.uiowa.edu/index.shtml (Links to an external site.)

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, http://distance.uiowa.edu/article/internet-connectiontestdownload (Links to an external site.).

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 DOE 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/ (Links to an external site.)

(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 (Links to an external site.).


There will additional readings provided on ICON. Please review your assignment and weekly modules listed in ICON 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 discussions. Each student will select a client and create a portfolio of 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. Content will 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.

Grading Criteria:
Written assignments = 80%
Attendance/participation: 20%
Final portfolio 25% of grade.

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%)

Assignments and Reading:
January 25
Read: Part 1. “Writing for Strategic Communication Industries”
In class – writing

**Assignment:** Research Brand Analysis. Select a large company (Fortune 500) and one of the company's specific products or services. An example might be Coca Cola and the product featured in your analysis might be Diet Coke.

Develop a document (a white paper) that presents the following information:

1) Company name, brand name, product or service name.
2) The company's brand regarding the logo, type face or color(s), if you can locate it on the website.
3) Share the boilerplate statement.
4) Share the brand and company positioning statement (USP).
5) List at least three of the target market's (demographics, psychographics, etc.)
6) How many social media platforms do they appear? Please list them.
7) What is consistent in every message visually?
8) What are they presently focused in communicating?

February 1
Read: Parts 2 and 3. “Writing for Strategic Communication Industries”

Read: “Finding your Brands Voice” By Harriet Cummings (Links to an external site.)
Read: https://creately.com/blog/diagrams/what-is-a-situation-analysis/ (Links to an external site.)

**Client company pitches in class.**

**DUE: Research and Brand Analysis**

**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.
4) **Create a situation analysis** of your findings. Develop a SWOT analysis to complement the situation analysis. The situation analysis will be added to your final portfolio.

**February 8**

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

**DUE: Brand Development, Client Selection, SWOT and Situation Analysis**

**Assignment: Client Research and Letter.**

1) Develop a business letter (in a traditional business letter format) 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: feature story, social media ads, etc.

5) Include a paragraph or two about the research you have done on the competition/industry.

**February 15**


Lead development – in class workshop

Media release – in class workshop

Editing - in class workshop

AP Style Quiz – in class


Due: Client Research and Letter

Assignment: Media releases and Media Kit

This assignment will be due in three weeks, March 8

Writing media releases is one of the most essential communication skills. Crafting bold headlines and compelling leads is critical to getting your client noticed and published. In this assignment you will create a media release for your client. This assignment allows you to begin to build a portfolio and media kit. All documents must be properly formatted and branded.

The other documents your media kit will contain should be:

1) Company history
2) Boilerplate statement
3) Media release
4) Branding information and logo guidelines
5) Company management with short biographies
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 host your final portfolio.

Each element should be prepared and formatted on its own page and contain the company brand.

February 22
Read: “How to Attract Attention with a Feature Article,” by Mark Nowlan https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/166662 (Links to an external site.)

Read: Parts 6 and 7. “Writing for Strategic Communication Industries”
(The Wall Street Journal Formula - Template) wallstreetjournal formula.pdf

Read: Chapter 3, 5. “Everybody Writes,” Ann Handley
**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); 3) Complement the company brand and product goals; and 4) Headline.

March 1

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


Read: Chapter 7 and Chapters 50-56. “Everybody Writes,” Ann Handley


**DUE: Feature Story**

**Assignment:** Media pitch – in class assignment

**Assignment:** Media Alert – in class assignment

March 8

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

**Due: Media Kit**

**Due Media Release**

**Article:** [https://contently.net/2016/04/05/resources/career-advice/journalism/editors-tell-all-what-subject-lines-work-best/](https://contently.net/2016/04/05/resources/career-advice/journalism/editors-tell-all-what-subject-lines-work-best/) (Links to an external site.)


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 and final portfolio. Please make sure all your materials are properly formatted and branded.

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 (or create one for this assignment) from an industry leader or company official.

3) Develop a holding statement. Make sure all your materials are properly formatted and branded.

March 15

Read: Part 12. “Writing for Strategic Communication Industries.”

Read: “17 Ideas for More Compelling Presentations” (Links to an external site.)
Read: https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffschmitt/2013/07/16/10-keys-to-writing-a-speech/#67ee309b4fb7 (Links to an external site.)

Assignment: Speech Writing: You will be assigned to write a two-minute speech which is approximately 300 words. All speeches will be presented during our next class. Your speech will be read by another member of class. The speech content could be a part of your crisis plans. Your speech could be a response presented to your board of directors or another group of your choosing (a press conference). Other topics will also be discussed in class.

Create a short introduction acknowledging the following:

a) 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 will this event affect your client?
b) 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?

c) Why are you choosing to address this group? How does it affect the company?

March 22
Read: Chapters 30 – 40, “Everybody Writes,” Ann Handley


DUE: Crisis Materials
Due: Written Speeches
Speeches – Presented in class – by another member of class

March 29
Read: https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo/why-search-engine-marketing-is-necessary
Read: Chapter 41 – 46, “Everybody Writes,” Ann Handley

Workshop with Canva

Assignment: Client Social Media Review

Choose a competitor you would like to analyze to better position your client. Develop a white paper with a specific list of important information from the competitor’s marketing on social media sites, remember to include keywords, hashtags, and marketing phrases. Identify why the keywords, hashtags and strategic marketing phrases are important to your client’s social media strategy. Include links to key social media pages, the platform, and any other information you are reviewing.

April 5

DUE: Client Social Media Review

Assignment: Client Social Media Posts.
Because of your research, you now know a great deal about your competitor(s). You understand how they position themselves from a branding standpoint, as well as what they are presently focused on communicating.

Create two different media posts on two social media platforms (please name the platforms) and present a short rationale for what your posts will accomplish for your client. Please include the following elements in your rationale:

1) Maintain brand and product/service consistency.

2) What is your purpose? To inform, sell, or persuade the reader?

3) How will your posts fit the target market? Define those you are hoping will respond or act from this post.

4) Use visual content – Remember tools like Canva can be very helpful.

5) List SEO and keywords based on your research and client needs.

April 12

DUE: Client Social Media Posts

Assignment! Advertising Collateral Materials – As a consultant to your client, determine the advertising needs. Does your client company need another feature story, new media announcement, a blog, 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)

April 19   Read: Chapter 8 – 18, “Everybody Writes,” Ann Handley

In Class: Real-time 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?

April 26
Portfolio Review Workshop
DUE: Advertising Collateral Materials/Brochure

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)

May 3
DUE: Final Class portfolio and final materials

May 10
Class presentation and discussion
Clients invited

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) (Links to an external site.)

**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 arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/ for information. (Links to an external site.)

- 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 (Links to an external site.)): "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 (Links to an external site.)).

- 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 (Links to an external site.)).
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/ (Links to an external site.).

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/ (Links to an external site.)
Speaking Center: https://speakingcenter.uiowa.edu/ (Links to an external site.)
Tutor Iowa: https://tutor.uiowa.edu/