

JOUR 3420-001 (45527)
Fall 2009

Public Relations Writing
Room 110, General Academic Building
Monday/Wednesday, 3–4:20 p.m.

Course Instructor: Koji Fuse, Ph.D.
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Office hours: Monday, 4:30–5:30 p.m.; Tuesday, 3–6 p.m.; or by appointment
(For meeting after 5 p.m., call me first.)
Web site: Blackboard for JOUR 3420-001
(Always use your Blackboard e-mail for class purposes.)
Teaching assistant: Nicole Holland (nmholland@gmail.com)

Overview:

As the first writing-intensive course in the public relations sequence, JOUR 3420 is designed to help students develop the professional-level thinking and writing skills expected of beginning public relations practitioners. It emphasizes different approaches required for particular communication objectives, publics and media. In addition, students will organize their work in their PProToolKit.

It is important for you to cultivate “proactive” attitudes required of a true professional who do not make excuses. Many assignments are given on tight deadlines to train you to become an efficient and effective public relations practitioner.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Apply reasoning, theory and creativity to the message-medium-public strategy;
2. Write clear, concise copy that is accurate, mechanically correct and logically organized;
3. Find and use reliable sources of information;
4. Communicate a message through different media in different formats; and
5. Work proactively to complete your task under deadline pressure.

Prerequisites:

JOUR 2310 and JOUR 2420 with at least a “C” grade in each before enrolling in this course. Concurrent enrollment of this course with those prerequisites is not allowed.

Course Structure:

This course consists of lecture, discussion and exercises. You are expected to keep up with readings, turn in all assignments on time and actively participate in class discussion. **To create an active learning environment, I assume that you have read the assigned materials before coming to class and will ask you specific questions.** As expected in a professional environment, deadlines are strictly observed. You will have three exams, 12 written assignments, one publication requirement, PProToolKit and in-class/take home exercises. Students taking this course for graduate credit must do additional work to successfully complete the course. See me for details. Your final grade is based on your total score, with 1,000 points possible. The breakdown of the total possible score is as follows:

Exams (300 points.)

Grammar & style exam:	100 points
Midterm exam:	100 points
Final exam:	100 points

Written assignments (500 points.)

Memo:	30 points
Design:	50 points
(client logo, letterhead, business envelope and business card)	
Letter:	30 points
Fact sheet:	40 points
Backgrounder:	50 points
Position paper:	50 points
Print news release:	30 points
Broadcast news release:	30 points
Web news release:	30 points
Feature story:	50 points
Media advisory:	30 points
Pitch letter:	30 points
Publication:	50 points

PRoToolKit (100 points.)

Participation (100 points)

In-class exercises:	50 points	(Personal information sheet and résumé: 5 points)
Attention and performance:	50 points	

Readings (to be also used in JOUR 4460):

(Required) Wilcox, Dennis L. *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques*. 6th ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2009. (Abbr. DW)

(Required) Kessler, Lauren, and Duncan McDonald. *When Words Collide: A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style*. 7th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2008. (Abbr. KM)

(Required) Williams, Robin. *The Non-Designer's Design Book: Design and Typographic Principles for the Visual Novice*. 3rd ed. Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press, 2008. (Abbr. RW)

(Required) The Associated Press. *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*. 44th ed. New York: Basic Books, 2009.

Note: Do not sell your textbooks. You will use the same textbooks in JOUR 4460.

Course Schedule (subject to change at the instructor's discretion):

- Aug. 31** Introduction to Class. Grammar & Style.
- Sept. 2** Public Relations Writing (DW Chapter 1); Discussion of Written Assignments.
Assignment: Personal Information Sheet and Résumé due.
- Sept. 7** *Labor Day!*
- Sept. 9** Research and Strategic Planning (DW Chapter 1).

- Sept. 14** Theories of Persuasion (DW Chapter 2).
- Sept. 16** Theories of Persuasion, *continued*.
- Sept. 21** Message Design Concepts (DW Chapter 8; RW).
Assignment: Memo due.
- Sept. 23** E-mail, Memos, Letters and Proposals (DW Chapter 14).
- Sept. 28** Fact Sheets (DW part of Chapter 6).
Assignment: Design and Letter due.
- Sept. 30** Backgrounders and Position Papers.
Note: Download and print out the “READING_BG_PP” file before coming to class. It is available in the Module 08 folder on Blackboard.
- Oct. 5** Backgrounders and Position Papers, *continued*.
Assignment: Fact Sheet due.
- Oct. 7** Grammar/Style (KM Chapters 1–6).
Assignment: Backgrounder due.
- Oct. 12** Grammar/Style (KM Chapters 7–12, Part 2), *continued*.
- Oct. 14** Feature Stories (DW Chapter 7); Brief Review for Midterm Exam.
- Oct. 19** **Midterm Exam (Chapters 1, 2, 6, 8 and 14; everything covered in class).**
- Oct. 21** Feature Stories, *continued*.
Assignment: Position Paper due.
- Oct. 26** Print News Releases (DW Chapters 4–5).
- Oct. 28** Print News Releases, *continued*.
Assignment: Feature Story with a Photo due.
- Nov. 2** Broadcast News (DW Chapter 9).
Assignment: Print News Release due.
- Nov. 4** Broadcast News, *continued*.
- Nov. 9** Writing for the Internet.
- Nov. 11** Writing for the Internet, *continued*.
Assignment: Broadcast News Release due.
- Nov. 16** Media Kits; Media Pitches (DW Chapter 6).
Assignment: Web News Release due.
- Nov. 18** Media Kits; Media Pitches, *continued*.
- Nov. 23** Ethics and Law in Public Relations (DW Chapter 3).
Note: Download and print out the PRSA Member Code of Ethics 2000 before coming to class. It is available in the Module 16 folder on Blackboard.
Assignment: Media Advisory due.
- Nov. 25** Ethics and Law in Public Relations, *continued*; Review on Grammar & AP Style.
Assignment: Pitch Letter due.
- Nov. 30** **Grammar & AP Style Exam.**
- Dec. 2** Work on PRoToolKit.

- Dec. 7** Presentations of PProToolKit.
Assignment: PProToolKit with Publication due.
- Dec. 9** Presentations of PProToolKit. Summary of Semester. Brief Review for Final Exam.
- Dec. 16** *Final Exam (Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9; everything covered in class) at 1:30 p.m. More details later.*

Attendance, Preparation and Participation:

You cannot have more than three inadmissible absences without penalty toward your final grade. Each additional invalid absence will cost you 10 points. You must sign the attendance sheet yourself and use the same signature throughout the semester; having someone sign your name is a form of academic dishonesty. In addition, three incidents of showing up after the class starts or leaving before it ends constitute one absence. Although you may tell me why you must miss or missed a class, **only “unforeseeable” circumstances (i.e., serious illness, family emergency) substantiated by third-party documentation will be accepted. Submit documentation within a week after an absence occurs.** Printer malfunctions, arrests for traffic warrants, difficulties in finding library materials, etc. are not “unforeseeable.” You must document a valid time conflict (i.e., an academic conference, religious observance) before it occurs. Disappearing during class is another form of academic dishonesty. Keep in mind the following warnings. First, the more classes you skip, the less education you receive. Your grade will suffer because of its high correlation with attendance. Second, you are still responsible for assignments due and course materials covered in a class period you miss. You must turn in all assignments on or before their due dates. Finally, simply showing up for class amounts to little. Avoid “passive learning”—sleeping comfortably, sitting leisurely at the back, text-messaging or having chitchat. Good preparation and active participation are essential. I retain my nonnegotiable right to evaluate your in-class performance.

Exams:

Latecomers will not be admitted after the first person finishes the exam and exits the room. Except for valid excuses specified in the “Attendance, Preparation and Participation” section, you should assume there is no make-up for missing the exam. Also, if you cannot take the exam on the day it is planned, you must let me know in advance and make an arrangement to take it before the original exam date. However, the final exam schedule is beyond my control. Put everything in your bag under the table before an exam starts. All exams are closed-book, closed-notes exams.

1. Grammar & style exam. You will have 50 grammar, spelling and AP style questions. However much or little you learned English grammar and style in JOUR 2310, it is time for you to aim to become a professional writer. Although most students find this exam extremely difficult, it is very basic from the professional standard. You must start reading *When Words Collide* and *The AP Stylebook* now and even memorizing some important rules.

2. Midterm and final exams. Each exam has 50 multiple-choice and true-false questions. In addition to the textbooks, the exams will cover everything discussed in class.

Written Assignments:

All assignments must be word-processed in 12-point font (no “funny” font, please), double-spaced unless otherwise specified, and turned in at the beginning of the class period on the day they are due. You are not allowed to use a lab printer to print out your assignment; bring a hardcopy to class. Late assignments will drop one letter grade for each day. Exceptions for this rule are the same as the “Attendance, Preparation and Participation” section. No e-mail submission of papers is allowed. **Extensive Internet research is strongly discouraged for this class; library searches and academic journal/book reading are expected. Include endnotes for your backgrounder and position paper. For each of the other assignments, attach a page of references. Remember that incomplete citations/references will cost you one letter grade.** Save all your work on your computer, or you may end up redoing the assignments when they get lost. Talk to me within a week of receiving your graded paper if you have questions. No consideration will be given beyond that time limit.

You will be held to high professional standards in your writing as follows:

- (1) Content and message appeals (50 percent of any written assignment): Your writing will be evaluated for organization of thought, strength of message, inclusion of the human element, persuasiveness, originality, and other content issues relevant to each assignment.
- (2) Grammar, style and format (50 percent of any written assignment): *The Associated Press Stylebook* and *When Words Collide* will be your guide to writing. Your writing will be graded carefully for mechanical content. For example:
 - Each misspelling, typographical error or AP style mistake will cost a half point.
 - One misspelling of a proper name will deduct one letter grade.
 - Other areas of concern will include improper heading format, use of difficult, unusual, big or dead words, awkward phrases, improper punctuation, long paragraphs or sentences, general sloppiness or lack of professionalism. Points to be deducted will vary depending on how significant the mistake is.
- (3) Originality: Your work must reflect your original ideas and existing facts. No form of academic dishonesty is tolerated. No matter how well you have done before, one incident of academic dishonesty will have grave consequences on your college career. A typical example of plagiarism is a feature piece with minor modifications on a single news story you happen to find on the Web. **Always research more than enough and use multiple sources to discover your own ideas and story angle.**
- (4) “Credit”: If your work contains too many errors, you will receive only credit. That is, you have earned an F or 50 percent of the total possible score for the assignment.

1. Memo (one page max.; single-spaced). Choose an organization that is local or has a local branch. You should choose an organization for which you want to intern or work in the future.

You are not allowed to choose any of the following organizations as your client:

- Well-known organizations (e.g., American Airlines, American Heart Association, Bank of America, Brinker, Dallas Zoo)
- Campus groups or organizations (e.g., sororities, fraternities)
- Organizations in which you have ever worked in any way, of which you have ever been a member, or for which you have ever done any course work
- Churches or faith-based organizations
- Bars, restaurants and music bands

- Organizations listed on Blackboard's Discussion Board, which your classmates have already taken as their clients
- Organizations listed on Blackboard, which other students took as their clients in the past

Seek my approval on your choice by discussing why you think it is a good organization to work on (e.g., a special event, an issue, profile candidate, enough materials, friendly staff), what has made you interested in it, and how you contacted it and got a permission to write about it. You cannot change the organization once you choose it; you must continue to research and work on the organization for the remaining written assignments. **Take time to conduct thorough research and see if the organization is appropriate for all other written assignments.**

2. Design. Apply design principles you have learned before as well as in this course. You must create a new client logo, letterhead, business envelope and business card. The letterhead is a template you will continue to use throughout the semester.

3. Letter on a New Letterhead (one page max.; single-spaced). Write a letter to a public relations professional of your client to explain at least three design principles incorporated into the new logo you created and try to persuade the organization to adopt it.

4. Fact sheet (two pages min.; single-spaced). Write an event fact sheet for your client.

5. Backgrounder (six pages min.). Look for and research an issue your client has been dealing with. Write a backgrounder of the issue.

6. Position paper (four pages min.). Take a stand on the issue you identified above. Write a position paper to support your client's position on the issue.

7. Print news release (two pages max.). Research your client's special event and write a print news release about it.

8. Broadcast news release (60 seconds and 30 seconds). Apply the broadcast news release format and style to the special-event print release you have written.

9. Web news release (two pages max.; single-spaced). Apply the Web news release format and style to the special-event print release you have written.

10. Feature story (five pages min.). Write a personality profile related to your client. A photo will be for extra credit (five points), but if done well, it will increase your chance of publication.

11. Media advisory (one page max.; single-spaced). Alert media to the special event you have been writing about.

12. Pitch letter (one page max.; single-spaced). Choose a print media outlet and find a journalist who has been covering news related to your organization. Write a pitch letter to sell your feature-story idea.

13. Publication. You must obtain a permission from your client and publish a feature story with your byline in the client's outlet or any other media outlet. Complete this assignment by the time you turn in your PProToolKit. However, show me your work as soon as you get it published.

PProToolKit:

Why throw away everything once you graduate from college? Because no one can recall all the detail about a particular topic, it will be helpful to have your own reference book. The objective of the PProToolKit is to get you started in compiling your resource guide, which also includes your writing and design samples produced in this course, as well as some other outlets.

Organize your materials by subject, such as fact sheets, backgrounders, position papers, print news releases, pitch letters, etc.

Your PRoToolKit must include the following:

- Updated résumé
- Clean copies of your work produced in this course
- Examples of memos, letters, fact sheets, backgrounders, features, position papers, print news releases, broadcast news releases, Web news releases, media advisories, pitch letters, and other collateral materials
- Word-processed class notes, including subjects other than PR materials (e.g., basics of PR, strategic planning, grammar and AP style, and social media PR); additional notes and copies of parts of your textbook (for extra credit of up to 20 points).
- Reprints/copies/summaries of pertinent industry articles, their complete source citations, and your summaries of the articles
- Any other elements (e.g., professional writing samples) that demonstrate your skills

Prepare a three-inch, three-ring binder with tabbed dividers now. Use plastic sheet protectors to include items you do not want to or cannot punch three holes on; class assignments that are “cleaned up” and portfolio-ready are also easily stored this way.

Grading:

90% or higher of total possible points:	A
80%–lower than 90%	B
70%–lower than 80%	C
60%–lower than 70%	D
Lower than 60%	F

Basic Course Policy:

This is a course in a professional field, and you are expected to accept and abide by the dictates of professionalism in the workplace. You must follow rules regarding deadlines and attendance. The sheer volume of assignments you must complete and submit on or before due dates is overwhelming, so be proactive. **Get things right the first time by always checking the *AP Stylebook* and *When Words Collide* because you will not have an opportunity to rewrite your work after the deadline in the professional world.** It would be extremely difficult for you to even receive a passing grade if you did not seriously and continually study by attentive listening, meticulous note-taking, active class participation, proactive professional attitudes, and timely submission of assignments. **Keep in mind that no study guide is available.**

You must follow the basic rules of the society as well. Academic dishonesty in particular has been a nationwide problem. Read through the “Categories of Misconduct” page at the Web site of the UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities.¹ Saying “I didn’t know that,” “He copied my work,” or “Others also plagiarized” will not save you, and the consequences of academic misconduct will be grave. Also “recycling” your previous work is not tolerated. Submitting work for this class is the same as making a statement that you have produced the work yourself in its entirety, and you have not previously produced this work for submission in

¹ UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, Categories of Misconduct, http://www.unt.edu/csrr/pdf/conduct/acts_of_misconduct.pdf.

another course or any other outlet. In the real world of journalism, for example, it does not matter whether you fabricate one story or 10; you will still get fired.

In addition, you are not the only person enrolled in this class. Even small noises you make will negatively affect its learning environment. **Furthermore, bringing your laptop to class is not allowed, and using a lab computer during class unless you are told to will immediately remove you from the class.** I expect you to behave as a responsible adult in class. Therefore, if you cheat, plagiarize, fabricate facts (e.g., asking someone to sign your name) or continually obstruct the class (e.g., no preparation, no participation, chitchat, frequently leaving the room or disappearing during class, disturbances such as cell phones, beepers and computers), I will remove you from class with an F as your final grade, and report the case to the dean of the School of Journalism. **There is no exception for this.**

If you have a disability and will require academic accommodations in this course, I would be happy to discuss your needs. Do not hesitate and wait until the end of the semester. The earlier, the better. Please register with the Office of Disability Accommodation and submit a Special Accommodation Request to me. For more information, contact Ron Venable, director of the Office of Disability Accommodation, at 940-565-4323 or ronv@unt.edu.

Finally, consider various options discussed at <http://www.unt.edu/transit/> to save on fuel costs.

Statement of Student Learning Outcomes, UNT Journalism

Since 1969, the UNT Department of Journalism, which is now the Frank W. and Sue Mayborn School of Journalism, has been accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. This national accreditation also extends to the Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism, the only accredited professional master's program in Texas. About one-fourth of all journalism and mass communication programs in the United States are accredited by ACEJMC. National accreditation enhances your education here, because it certifies that the department and graduate school adhere to many standards established by the council. Among these standards are student learning outcomes, covered by journalism courses in all sequences.

This course, JOUR 4210, will help to meet the student learning outcomes that have been checked by your professor, Dr. Koji Fuse.

Each graduate must:

- Understand and apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practices.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Sept. 1, 2009