Course Name: JOUR 3420 Public Relations Writing
Section Information: Section 002 (Fall 2010)
Class Meetings: Monday & Wednesday, 12:00 noon–1:20 P.M. GAB 110
The Twitter hashtag for this course is #untj3420

Prerequisites:
Journalism major status. Additionally, it is strongly recommended that students complete JOUR 2320 before enrollment in this course.

Course Instructor: Samra Jones Bufkins, MJ, APR
Lecturer, Strategic Communications
Office: GAB 102 C
Office phone: 940–565–2167
Office hours: 30 minutes before & after each class, Tuesday 1:30–2:30 and by appointment or any time my office door is open.
E–mail: Samra.Bufkins@unt.edu
Twitter: @samjb

Textbooks:

Do not sell your textbooks. You will use the same textbooks in JOUR 4460. UNT and The Mayborn School of Journalism do not require students to purchase textbooks from the University Bookstore. Many are available through other bookstores or online.
Additional required resources:
- UNT class Blackboard
- Selected websites and handouts
- Twitter hashtag #untj3420 (You must also follow @samjb)
- UNT Email

Course Description:
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. Students will work with an actual client for the duration of the semester. The course emphasizes different approaches required for particular communication objectives, publics and media. In addition, students will organize their work in their PRoToolKit, which is their beginning portfolio of their body of work in public relations.

Course Objectives:
After taking JOUR 3420, each student will be able to:
- 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
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications profession, targeted audiences and purposes
- Critically evaluate his/her own work for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style, and grammatical correctness
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the PR profession
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of individuals and groups in a global society in relationship to communications.

Attendance, Preparation and Participation Policy:
You are expected to attend and participate in each class meeting, complete all assignments and online assessments on time and participate in any online and social media activities that are assigned. I will periodically give quizzes covering the assigned readings and current events—these will occur in the first 10 minutes of class. Be there. There may also be in-class writing exercises. Don’t be late. I take roll in writing at the beginning of each class.

You cannot have more than three absences without penalty toward your final grade. Each additional absence will cost you 10 points. I reserve the right to drop any student with three or more unexcused absences. An excused absence is one about which you have communicated with me at least 24 hours in advance of the class time, or for which you can submit third party documentation. Only “unforeseeable” circumstances (i.e., serious illness, family emergency) substantiated by third-party documentation will be accepted after an absence. Submit documentation within a week after an absence occurs.
In addition, three incidents of showing up after class starts or leaving before it ends constitute one absence. **You are late if you arrive after I have taken roll.**

Disappearing during class is a form of academic dishonesty. Keep in mind the following: First, the more classes you skip, the less education you receive and the lower grade you will earn; second, **if you miss a class, you still must turn in an assignment on or before its due date**; and third, avoid “passive learning” — sleeping, sitting leisurely at the back, working on assignments for another class, playing on Facebook, text-messaging or having chitchat. I retain my nonnegotiable right to evaluate your in-class performance and ask anyone to leave if they are disruptive or their inattention is disruptive. **ONCE IN THE CLASSROOM SILENCE ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND PUT THEM AWAY. THIS INCLUDES MUSIC HEADPHONES. DO NOT USE THE COMPUTER DURING CLASS UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO.**

**Communication:**
Communication between students and instructor will often be via email. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK YOUR UNT EMAIL ADDRESS OR FORWARD IT TO YOUR PERSONAL EMAIL.** If you must reach me at night or on a weekend and need a quick response, **DO NOT EMAIL ME THROUGH BLACKBOARD because I cannot respond via mobile device.**

**Class Format**
This course consists of lecture, discussion and exercises. It is writing intensive. You must keep up with readings, turn in all assignments on time in the correct format and actively participate in class discussion and Twitter feeds. **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, including administer pop quizzes.** As expected in a professional environment, deadlines are strictly observed. You will have three exams, 12 written assignments, one external—publication requirement, a portfolio evaluation and in-class exercises & quizzes.

**In this course, you will:**
- Practice applying good writing techniques and visual communications techniques to specific contexts in public relations
- Learn how to apply general design principles to your communications
- Learn how to work with an actual client
- Begin to develop a professional portfolio

**As demanded in a professional environment, deadlines are strictly observed.** You can expect 12 written assignments, one publication requirement, a portfolio review, three exams, and several pop quizzes or in-class writing assignments.
Evaluation
Exams (3, 100 pts each)  300 points
Writing Assignments  450 points
Publication  50 points
Portfolio Review  100 points
Participation/quizzes/exercises  100 points

Grading System:
900 points or higher, A
800 points or higher, B
700 points or higher, C
600 points or higher, D
Fewer than 600 points, F

Exams (300 points)
  Grammar & style exam: 100 points
  Midterm exam: 100 points
  Final exam: 100 points

Written assignments (500 points)
  Memo: 30 points
  Design project: 50 points
  Letter: 30 points
  Feature story: 50 points
  Pitch letter: 30 points
  Backgrounder: 50 points
  Position paper: 50 points
  Fact sheet: 40 points
  Print news release: 30 points
  Broadcast news release: 30 points
  Social Media release: 30 points
  Media advisory: 30 points
  Publication: 50 points

PRoToolKit (100 points)

Participation (100 points)
  In-class exercises: 50 points
  Attention & performance: 50 points

Written Assignments:
Before completing any assignments, you must have an actual client for this class. Choose an organization that is local or has a local branch. It cannot be an organization for which you are working or interning this semester, or have worked or interned in the past. Avoid your family’s businesses. Before committing, go over this assignments list with your contact at the organization and be sure they understand what you are required to do for this class. “My client wanted me to do something else” is not an excuse for a late or missed assignment. You are not allowed to choose any of the following organizations as your client:
• Well-known national organizations  
• 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 other coursework  
• Churches or faith-based organizations  
• Bars, restaurants and music bands  
• Organizations posted on Blackboard’s Discussions, which your classmates have already taken as their clients  
• Organizations listed on Blackboard, which past students took as their clients  

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 written assignments. You will also be working with this client during the first half of Journalism 4460.

Description of Assignments:
1. **Memo (one page max.; single-spaced).** Write a memo in which you seek my approval of your client choice by discussing why you think it is a good organization to work on (e.g., a special event, an issue, a candidate for a profile, enough materials), what has made you interested in it, and how you contacted it and got permission to write about it. Include information on their website if available.

2. **Design.** Apply design principles to create a new client logo, letterhead, business envelope and business card. The letterhead is a template you will continue to use throughout the semester. Podcasts that explain how to use design tools are available in the Mac Lab.

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

4. **Feature story (five pages min., double-spaced).** Write a personality profile related to your client. A photo (which you must take) will be for extra credit (five points), but if done well, it will increase your chance of publication.

5. **Pitch letter (one page max.; single-spaced).** Choose a few print media outlets, obtain my approval on them and find a journalist who has been covering news related to your organization. Write a pitch letter to promote your feature story.

6. **Backgrounder (six pages min.).** Look for and research an issue your client has been dealing with or that affects their industry. Write a backgrounder about the issue.

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

8. **Fact sheet (two pages min.; single-spaced).** Write an event fact sheet for your client.
9. **Print news release** *(two pages min.)*. Research your client’s special event and write a print news release about it.

10. **Broadcast news release** *(60 seconds and 30 seconds)*. Apply the broadcast news release format and style to the special-event print news release.

11. **Web/social media news release** *(includes design/layout)*. Apply the Web/social media news release format and style to the special-event print release you have written.

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

13. **External publication**. You must get my approval on your target publication, obtain permission from your client, and then publish a feature story with your byline in a credible print-media or reviewed online media outlet I have approved. Complete this assignment by the time you turn in your PRoToolKit. However, show me your work as soon as you get it published and include it in the PRoToolKit.

**PRoToolKit:**
The objective of the PRoToolKit is to get you started in compiling your professional resource guide, which also includes your writing and design samples—both coursework and professional work—that make up your portfolio. Organize your materials by subject, such as fact sheets, backgrounders, position papers, print news releases, pitch letters, grammar and AP style, etc.

**Your PRoToolKit must include the following:**
- Table of contents
- Updated résumé
- Clean, error-free copies of all your work produced in this course
- Examples — available on Blackboard and on the Web — of memos, letters, designs, features, pitch letters, backgrounders, position papers, fact sheets, print news releases, broadcast news releases, Web news releases, media advisories, and other collateral materials and copies of parts of your textbook. Attach an annotation or summary to each example to explain what’s right and what’s wrong and why
- Reprints/copies/summaries of pertinent industry articles, their complete source citations, and your summaries of the articles
- PR materials, and additional notes (for extra credit of up to 20 points).
- 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.
## Course Schedule—subject to change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic/Readings</th>
<th>Assignment due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 30</td>
<td>Introduction to Class and discussion of syllabus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 1</td>
<td>Public Relations Writing (DW Chapter 1)</td>
<td>Personal Information Sheet and Résumé due</td>
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<td>Sept. 6</td>
<td>Labor Day—no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 8</td>
<td>Research and Strategic Planning (DW Chapter 1); Theories of Persuasion (DW Chapter 2).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>Theories of Persuasion, <em>continued.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 15</td>
<td>E-mails, Memos, Letters and Proposals (DW Chapter 14).</td>
<td>Blackboard Approval of Client Organization due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 20</td>
<td>Publicity Photos and Message Design Concepts (DW Chapter 8; RW)</td>
<td>Assignment due: Memo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 22</td>
<td>Feature Stories (DW Chapter 7).</td>
<td>Assignment due: Design and Letter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>Feature Stories, <em>continued.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>Media Pitches (DW Pages 152–162 of Chapter 6).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Assignment due: Feature Story with a Photo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 6</td>
<td>Backgrounders and Position Papers, <em>continued.</em></td>
<td>Blackboard Approval on Print Media Outlet due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 11</td>
<td>Grammar/Style (KM Chapters 1–6).</td>
<td>Assignment due: Pitch Letter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic/Readings</td>
<td>Assignment due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td><em>Midterm Exam</em> (Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8 and 14; message design; backgrounderers and position papers; everything covered in class).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 20</td>
<td>Print News Releases (<em>DW</em> Chapters 4–5).</td>
<td>Assignment due: <em>Backgrounder</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 27</td>
<td>Fact Sheets, Media Advisories and Media Kits (<em>DW</em> Pages 141–152 of Chapter 6).</td>
<td>Assignment due: <em>Print News Release</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 1</td>
<td>Fact Sheets, Media Advisories and Media Kits, <em>continued</em>.</td>
<td>Assignment: due <em>Position Paper</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 3</td>
<td>Broadcast News (<em>DW</em> Chapter 9).</td>
<td>Assignment due: <em>Fact Sheet</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 8</td>
<td>Broadcast News, <em>continued</em>.</td>
<td>Assignment due: <em>Media Advisory</em></td>
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<td>Nov. 10</td>
<td>Writing for the Internet (<em>DW</em> Chapter 12).</td>
<td>Assignment due: <em>Broadcast News Release due</em></td>
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<td>Nov. 15</td>
<td>Writing for the Internet, <em>continued</em>.</td>
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<td>Nov. 17</td>
<td>Ethics and Law in Public Relations (<em>DW</em> Chapter 3). Note: Download and print out the PRSA Member Code of Ethics 2000 before coming to class. It is available in Blackboard</td>
<td>Assignment due: <em>Social Media News Release</em></td>
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<td>Nov. 22</td>
<td>Ethics and Law in Public Relations, <em>continued</em>; Grammar &amp; AP Style.</td>
<td>Assignment due: <em>Social Media News Release</em></td>
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<td>Nov. 24</td>
<td><em>Grammar &amp; AP Style Exam</em>.</td>
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<td>Nov. 29</td>
<td>Catch-up, Work on PRoToolKit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 1</td>
<td>Presentations of PRoToolKit.</td>
<td>Assignment due: <em>Presentation of PRoToolKit</em></td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic/Readings</td>
<td>Assignment due</td>
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<td><em>PRoToolKit with Publication verification</em></td>
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<td>Dec. 6</td>
<td>Review &amp; Recap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 13</td>
<td><em>Final Exam</em> (Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 12; plus everything covered in class and a writing exercise).</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
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**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 the due dates is overwhelming, so work on them proactively. **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.**

**Academic Honesty:**
When you submit work for this class, that 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 another course or any other outlet. Plagiarism, fabrication, copyright infringement, and similar uses of other people’s work are unacceptable. Read through the “Categories of Academic Dishonesty” on Pages 3–4 of UNT Policy No. 18.1.16 (Student Standards of Academic Integrity).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. Plagiarism, in a nutshell, is using other people’s written words as your own. Some people consider the use of 7–10 words in a row, copied from another source, as plagiarism. Be sure to include citations when using other people’s writing, because plagiarism is a serious offense in any discipline, especially in journalism. It is a firing offense in the professional world. Any situations involving potential academic dishonesty will be handled through procedures established by the UNT Office of Academic Integrity. The process also includes the opportunity for students to appeal the outcome. Read specific procedures at [http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm](http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm). In this course, if you use a string of seven consecutive words, use quotation marks and refer to the original source. In addition, avoid using an extensive quote or too many quotes. In short, you must present your original work. Furthermore, you are allowed to neither bring your laptop to class nor use a lab computer or other electronic device during class unless you are told to.

Journalism Course Registration Requirements
1. The Mayborn School of Journalism, in conjunction with the Registrar’s Office, has eliminated the need for individual class codes for the majority of journalism courses. Registration will begin on the dates noted in the schedule of classes each semester. The system is a live, first come/first serve program; thus, we are unable to maintain the traditional waiting list as has been done previously.

2. By registering for this course, you are stating that you have taken the required prerequisites according to your catalog year and major/minor status. If the instructor later determines that you have not taken and passed these requirements, then you may be dropped at any point in the semester. If you have questions about your prerequisites, please see an adviser.

3. A journalism major enrolled in any restricted 3000 and 4000 level classes must have taken and passed the GSP test, all pre-major courses, and Math 1680 and also have applied for major status. Students must earn and maintain a 2.5 UNT and/or overall GPA (depending upon catalog year) to be eligible for major-level courses. Pre-majors must file a formal application for major status in the final semester of pre-major status to be eligible for early registration of major-level classes in the following semester.

Re-taking Failed Courses
Students will not be allowed to take automatically a failed journalism course more than two times. Once you have failed a journalism course twice, you will not be allowed to enroll in that course for 12 months. Once you have waited 12 months after failing a course twice, you may make an appeal to the professor teaching the course to be allowed to enroll a third time.

Disability Accommodation
The School of Journalism cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodations to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students. If you have not registered with ODA, please do so and present your written accommodation request to me by the 12th day of class.

SETE
The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a university-wide online evaluation and a requirement for all UNT classes. The School of Journalism needs your input to improve our teaching and curriculum. This short survey will be available at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. Prompt completion of the SETE will mean earlier access to final semester grades. You are a critical part of our growth and success. We look forward to your input through SETE.

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