**CMN 3960-PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING**

**SPRING 2021**

**SYLLABUS**

Instructor: Rashmi Thapaliya, Ph.D.

Time: January-May (Online)

Credit Hours: 3

E-mail: rthapaliya@eiu.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Thursday 11 a.m.-noon (Virtual. Email/Zoom)

**Text:** Wilcox, D. L. (2012). *Public relations writing and media techniques*, Prentice Hall.

**Course Overview:** Writing is an essential skill for public relations professionals who advocate on behalf of an organization. Effective press releases, pitch letters, campaign kits, speeches, blogs, tweets, and web pages get your message out to publics and stakeholders. This requires the ability to write for diverse audiences and to master different genres and styles of public relations writing. This course introduces you to public relations writing. It is an applied course designed to develop essential writing skills for a career in advertising, corporate communication, public relations or other areas in communication. Our different writing assignments will provide an opportunity for you to not only strengthen your writing skills, but to build your own professional portfolio and to prepare for PR writing tests when interviewing for jobs.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of the semester, students will:

1. understand and have practiced fundamentals of structure and message construction.
2. understand and have practiced stylistic elements as well as how to write for various media.
3. have examined legal and ethical issues.
4. understand how to tailor your messages to different situations and audiences.
5. be able to use AP style.
6. have crafted at least three quality documents for your professional PR portfolio.
7. be prepared for public relations writing assessment tests when on the job market.

**Online Format:** This class takes place 100% online. **It requires you to complete one module per week (which you can find under the content tab).** You will need to carefully review all instructions for each module on D2L at the beginning of each week, so that you can independently complete all tasks by all deadlines. The deadlines for each task will be posted on D2L, and it is your responsibility to keep track of them. If you are ever unsure, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

You need to schedule enough time for each module. You will not be able to complete a module in just one sitting. Make sure to allocate enough time to read all the materials posted on D2L before starting the assignment for each module. I highly recommend logging in to D2L and checking your D2L email and newsfeed regularly to receive all updates regarding our class.

**Tech Requirements:** For this class you will need:

* Stable internet access
* An internet browser that runs D2L and its features
* Software that allows you to read PDF and .doc files

**Tech Support:** For problems with D2L and other software used in this class, contact EIU’s Technology Support (<https://www.eiu.edu/panthertech/)> at (217)581-HELP

**Class Policies**

Communication with the Professor

Please use your university email to communicate with the professor. Please, please, please talk to me at any time if you have questions or concerns. I am here to help, but if you don’t ask me, I can’t help you.

All electronic communication should be professional. If you decide to communicate with the professor via email, you should:

* use only professional email (nothing like [donotcallme@yahoo.com](mailto:donotcallme@yahoo.com)),
* always use the following subject line: PR WRITING: MAIN REASON YOU ARE WRITING,
* have a professional greeting,
* include your full name, class (PR Writing) in your email,
* write email as you were to write an actual letter (use a standard greeting, clearly state the purpose of your email in the lead, choose words carefully, etc.), and
* be SHORT, professional, and respectful.

A grammatically correct, organized short email is a simple and effective way to show your respect and professionalism. **I reserve the right NOT to answer any emails that do not meet these requirements.** Any emails on weekdays will be answered within 24 hours. Weekend emails will be answered on the next weekday of classes (i.e., if there is a school holiday on Monday, the email will be answered on Tuesday).

**Late work policy:** Deadlines are critical in public relations and therefore they will also be critical in this class. A late penalty of 20% deduction will be applied for late assignments (for 48 hours after the deadline). Late assignment will not be accepted after that and you will get 0 for the assignment. It is your responsibility to get your assignments done on time, please **DO NOT** expect me to grade your assignments after you have missed the deadlines.

**Diversity in Practice**

An important component of the study of public relations will be to incorporate cultural and social diversity, wherever appropriate, in course readings and assignments. The class includes components related to diversity, multiculturalism and inclusivity. You will be exposed to these ideas repeatedly, and we will discuss gender, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disabilities and other areas of difference as they relate to research topics. Awareness of these differences is a first step for researchers and public relations practitioners to be successful in their work.

Whenever possible during the process of this course, students should explore elements of cultural and ethnic diversity within the parameters of classroom and field assignments. A greater understanding of the cultural differences in our society will enhance the learning experience and help students develop work that is of greater value to the worldwide audience.

**Plagiarism and Cheating** : For information on Eastern’s policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty, please check EIU’s current Academic Regulations in the undergraduate catalogue.

You are responsible for knowing the university policy on what constitutes academic dishonesty. Here is the short version: **ALWAYS** give credit—I will assume that everything you turn in (unless otherwise noted) is your own personal work, not borrowed work or group-created work.

**It is important to remember that plagiarism is not based upon intent.** Just because it wasn’t intentional or it was an accident does not mean that it was not plagiarism. It is!

If you turn in something without giving credit to others whose ideas or words you used, you will definitely receive a 0 for the assignment; additional consequences can include failure of the course and even expulsion from the university.

If you collaborate with someone else on an assignment and turn in substantially similar work, you are both guilty of plagiarism.

If you turn in something written by someone else, expect to fail the course and be reported to the Dean of Students. Do your own work. Give credit where credit is due.

**Academic integrity**: Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU’s Code of Conduct (http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

**Students with disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1210, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

**The Student Success Center**

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 1301.

**Discussion Etiquette**

Eastern Illinois University (EIU) is committed to open, frank, and insightful dialogue in all of its courses. Diversity has many manifestations, including diversity of thoughts, opinion, and values. We encourage all learners to be respectful of that diversity and to refrain from inappropriate commentary. Should such inappropriate comments occur, faculty will request that inappropriate content be removed and will recommend university disciplinary action. Learners as well as faculty should be guided by common sense and basic etiquette. The following are good guidelines to follow:

* Never post, transmit, promote, or distribute content that is known to be illegal.
* Never post harassing, threatening, or embarrassing comments.
* If you disagree with someone, respond to the subject, not the person. Conflict of ideas are encouraged, while conflicts of feelings are discouraged.
* Never post content that is harmful, abusive; racially, ethically, or religiously offensive, vulgar; sexually explicit; or otherwise potentially offensive.

**Response Time**

I will respond to your emails within 24 hours during weekdays (Monday to Friday afternoon). I will respond to your weekend emails on Monday. I will grade your assignments and posts within two weeks of the due date.

**Booth Library:** Located in the center of campus, Booth Library is the best place to do research, find expert help, or study in a calm, distraction-free environment. In addition to the many print resources, Booth provides access to high quality e-books, journals and scholarship not freely available on the Web. Stop by the Reference Desk or go

to http://library.eiu.edu to explore library resources. Get expert help with your research by contacting the Booth Library reference librarians. Visit, call 581-6072, or go to http://booth.eiu.edu/ask to connect with a librarian.

**Assignments**

*Exams* – 2 @100 points each

Quizzes- 6 @10 points each

*Copy Editing Assignment*

*News Release (2 @ 50 points each)*

*Media Advisory (2 @25 points each)*

*Media Pitch (2 @25 points each)*

*Tweetfolio*

*Media Kit*

*Discussion Boards-*You will post and reply on discussion boards several times during the semester.

**Point Distribution**

**Grading**

This class will be based on a system of 1100 points.

Exam 1  100 points

Exam 2  100 points

Copy Editing Assignment  100 points

News Release  100 points

Media Advisory 50 points

Media Pitch 50 points

Tweetfolio 200 points

Media Kit 200 points

Quizzes (10 pts each) 60 points

Discussion Boards 140 points

**Grading Scale**

A (90% and Above)

B (80-89%)

C (70-79%)

D (60-69%)

F (Less than 60%)

**Tentative Class Schedule**

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| Weeks | Topic | Assignments and Readings |
| 1(1/11-1/17) | Class Introduction  What is PR Writing ? | Read syllabus and schedule;  read Ch. 1, p. 1-5  **Discussion Board#1 (Introduction)**  **Discussion Board#2** |
| 2 (1/19-1/24) | Rules of Style in PR Writing | Read Ch. 1, pp. 19-31  **Discussion Board #3** |
| 3 (1/25-1/31) | Audiences for PR Writing | Read Ch. 2, pp. 32-43  **Discussion Board #4**  **Copyediting Exercise Due** |
| 4 (2/1-2/7) | News Release | **Discussion Board #5** |
| 5 (2/8- 2/14) | News Release | **Discussion Board #6**  **Press Release#1 Due** |
| 6 (2/15-2/21) | Exam#1 |  |
| 7 (2/22-2/28) | Media Advisories | **Press Release#2 Due**  **Discussion Board #7** |
| 8 (03/1-3/7) | Pitching the media | Read Ch. 7 & Ch. 13  **Media Advisory#1 &2 Due**  **Discussion Board #8** |
| 9(3/8-3/14) | Digital and Social Media Writing | **Discussion Board #9**  **Media Pitch#1 &2 Due** |
| 10(3/15-3/21) | Digital and Social Media Writing | **Discussion Board #10**  Assign Tweetfolio |
| 11(03/22-  03/28) | PR Writing & Ethics | **Discussion Board #11** |
| 12 (3/29-4/4) | The law and Public Relations Writing | **Discussion Board #12** |
| 13(4/5-4/11) | **Exam #2** |  |
| 14(4/12-4/18) | Media Kit | Read Ch. 6 & 7  **Discussion Board #13**  *Assign Media Kit* |
| 15(4/19-4/25) | Media Kit | Read Ch.8 |
| 16(4/26-5/2) | **Work on Media Kit** | **Discussion Board #14** |
| 17 (5/3-7) | **Finals Week** | **Media Kit Due**  **Tweetfolio Due** |