Eastern Illinois University  
New Course Proposal  
3705 JOU, Public Relations Writing

1. Catalog Description
   (a) Journalism 3705  
   (b) Public Relations Writing  
   (c) 2-2-3  
   (d) On demand  
   (e) PR Writing  
   (f) The study and practice of writing for public relations including news releases, brochures, newsletters, Web site copy and applications, for print, electronic, and new media.  
   (g) Prerequisites: A minimum grade of “C” in JOU 2101 and JOU 2901 or permission of the instructor

2. Objectives of the Course
   (a) Course Objectives:  
      • To focus students’ writing skills on public relations applications, including news releases, brochures, newsletters, Web site copy and other applications, for print, electronic, and new media  
      • To develop an understanding of the work of a public relations practitioner, specifically one who performs the functions of media relations, public information and public affairs  
      • To apply the concepts and practices of audience analysis and journalistic writing to public relations writing  
   (b) NA  
   (c) Assessment  
      • In-class and out-of-class writing assignments designed to assess student skills in public relations writing. These assignments will be critiqued by the instructor. Some assignments will require revision and rewriting.  
      • Professional activities, e.g., reports on pertinent speakers, or meetings that enhance the students' understanding of the profession of public relations  
      • Quizzes  
   (d) NA  
   (e) Writing Centered. Students learn the principles and the process of writing in all of its stages, from inception to completion. The quality of students’ writing is the principal determinant of the course grade.

3. Outline of the Course
   (a) Two 100-minute courses are held each of 15 weeks. Weekly topics will include  
      Week 1: Introduction to Public Relations Writing: What PR writing is; how it differs from other forms; what it is designed to accomplish; what it should look like. Lab: A comparison of writing styles.  
      Week 2: Research and planning issues in developing communication: Reporting for PR Writing; Other sources used to develop content; how PR Writing fits into an overall plan. Lab: Developing gathering content.  
      Week 3: Ethics and legal considerations: Codes of Ethics from PRSA and IABC; Unethical persuasion; defamation, privacy copyright and trademarks. Lab: Hypotheticals involving ethical and legal situations.  
      Week 4: Grammar, usage, style, and inclusive language: Writing for clarity and for audience and objective. Lab: Grammar refresher.  
      Week 5: Writing for a purpose; simple business applications: Differences between informative and persuasive writing with a focus on informative writing; elements and attributes of informative writing. Lab: Informative and Persuasive writing.

Week 7: News writing for mass media: news releases, focusing on crises: Couching your story in legitimate news values; talking the language of news. Lab: News Releases and beyond (working with media).

Week 8: News writing for mass media: news releases, focusing on newsworthiness: Making your messages newsworthy; knowing what reporters need. Lab: News Releases and beyond.

Week 9: News writing for mass media: news releases, focusing on newsworthiness: Deciding and developing the placement of your message; understanding and using directories; understanding the local and national angles. Lab: News Releases and beyond.

Week 10: Specialized audiences and informational objectives. Newsletter copy: From uncontrolled media to controlled media; Gauging the necessary qualities of newsletters (as directed at audiences); Giving newsletter copy audience appeal. Lab: Newsletter copy.

Week 11: Specialized audiences and informational objectives: Annual reports and working with numbers: Options and angles in the presentation of data; Lab: Annual report copy.

Week 12: Specialized audiences: Brochure copy: Combining audience and objective with the written and graphical presentation of information (writing headlines, breakout boxes, captions and pull quotes). Lab: Brochure copy.

Week 13: Global audiences: Writing for the Web: Written and graphical differences among controlled media (newsletters, annual reports, brochures and the Internet): Lab: Writing for the Web.

Week 14-15: Writing for special events and campaigns: Coordinating the coverage and written material of complex projects. Understanding how news is released. Lab: Developing copy for a complex project.

4. Rationale
(a) Students who study public relations (i.e., Public Relations minors, Journalism majors, Speech Communication majors, and others) need a writing course specifically designed for them to learn and to apply public relations writing. The field of public relations has expanded to include both stronger grounded theory and new forms of communication. These must be reflected in a course that is strongly grounded in instruction in media relations.

(b) This course targets junior-level students. Basic courses such as JOU 2101 and JOU 2901 provide a basis from which students use planning and information about audience and objective to carefully craft a focus for their writing. Furthermore, this course should better prepare students for the advanced Public Relations courses (JOU/SPC 4919 and JOU/SPC 4920. Prerequisites: A minimum grade of “C” in JOU 2101 and JOU 2901 or permission of the instructor.

(c) Speech Communication 3960: Advocacy and Message Design.
(1) The new Speech Communication writing course emphasizes advocacy and persuasive writing; this course will emphasize objective, informational writing.
(2) No course will be deleted with the approval of PR Writing. There is exceptional need, as attested to by anecdotal assessment data, to increase the writing experience of Journalism Majors and Public Relations Minors. Students do not get enough writing experience in this specialized application to support advanced classes, internships and jobs.
(3) This course will be required for journalism majors seeking a concentration in public relations. This course also will be a required or elective course in the revised Public Relations Minor.

(d) This course will be required for journalism majors seeking a concentration in Public Relations. This course may also be a required or elective course in the revised Public Relations Minor.
5. Implementation
(a) Faculty member(s) to whom the course may be assigned: Dr. Mary Durkin Wohlrabe.
(b) NA
(c) Text:
(d) Spring 2004

6. Community college transfer: A community college course will not be judged equivalent to this course.

7. Date approved by the Journalism Department: November 21, 2002

8. Date approved by the CAH Curriculum Committee: December 18, 2002

9. Date approved by CAA: January 30, 2003