

**COMM 318-20W Public Relations Writing** (writing intensive course)

Fall 2018

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30-3:45 p.m.

Class meets at Lewis Towers, Room 410

**Professor:** Scott Phillips  
**Office:** Lewis Tower, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor (LT-900C)  
**E-mail:** [sphillips10@luc.edu](mailto:sphillips10@luc.edu)  
**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Texts:** *Writing Without Bullshit*, by Josh Bernoff

*Associated Press Stylebook 2017* or *2018*(available as a book, app or online)

**Objectives**

In this course, we'll develop our writing skill as it applies to contemporary public relations practice. This will include: basic writing technique, research, understanding of how writing serves public relations strategic goals, and style & format.

You will complete a wide range of writing assignments, including timed in-class assignments and out-of-class assignments.

In-class assignments: these are our "scratch pad" assignments; they're developed to improve specific aspects of your writing, and to help you learn to write on deadline. Most, but not all, will be writing-based. Some will involve production work in support of your writing. These will be graded as follows: "2" for superior and completed in class; "1" for "good work, possibly incomplete; and "0" for "work in substantial need of improvement or completion, or work not attempted." These assignments will be logged as part of your participation grade.

At the end of the semester, you'll present your best work in a printed portfolio. Please keep all assignments until after the class ends.

While writing is at the center of this class, we will use the class topics to link to the larger field of public relations practice. Your textbook also goes beyond just writing. So think of this class as a complement to the basic public relations class.

**Writing Intensive**

This course is designated as a writing intensive course for purposes of your Loyola curriculum. For more information, visit

<http://www.luc.edu/soc/academics/socwritingintensiverequirement/>.

### **AP Style**

For many years, the public relations industry has been intimately connected to the newspaper industry. Because newspapers use Associated Press (AP) Style, this has been the standard format for print-based public relations writing. Today, newspapers are less important as audiences have moved online. But AP style is still important as a foundation for written communication. First, you *will* be pitching to journalists in your career. Second, AP style brings discipline and consistency to your writing. Knowing AP style is a marker of your status as a professional. Finally, when you seek employment, you'll take a writing test as part of the application process. That test will likely include knowledge of AP style.

### **Writing Without B.S.**

Josh Bernoff has written a comprehensive guide to changing how you write. In this practical and witty book, you'll learn to front-load your writing with pithy titles, subject lines, and opening sentences. You'll acquire the courage and skill to purge weak and meaningless jargon, wimpy passive voice, and cowardly weasel words. And you'll get used to writing directly to the reader to make every word count. At the center of it all is the Iron Imperative: Treat the reader's time as more valuable than your own. Learn to embrace this approach to business writing, and your clients, your boss, and your colleagues will be more likely recognize and appreciate your thinking.

Follow Josh's blog here: [www. http://withoutbullshit.com/blog](http://withoutbullshit.com/blog)

### **Keeping in Touch**

Get the most out of your instructor! I am available to help you:

- During my office hours
- By email
- By appointment at my office

Additionally, I will post digital copies of course work, links to resources and other materials on SAKAI.

### **Accommodations**

Any student with a learning disability who needs accommodation during class sessions or exams should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities to the instructor during the first week of class; this information will be treated in complete confidence. The instructor will accommodate students' needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the responsibility of each student to plan in advance to meet their own needs and assignment due dates. Details are available at [www.luc.edu/sswd](http://www.luc.edu/sswd).

Students are excused for recognized religious holidays. Please let me know in advance if you have a conflict.

### Grading

Students will be expected to know material covered in lectures and the textbook, and this will be measured through outside writing assignments and exercises.

Four quizzes	20%
Weekly assignments	60%
Final portfolio	10%
Participation/attendance/in-class writing	10%

### Grading Criteria for Written Work

- A:** Publishable work with no spelling, grammatical, punctuation or AP Style errors and the proper information and sources written in a lively, well-organized manner.
- B:** Minimal spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Minimal missing information and sources; minimal problems with the lead and organization.
- C:** Notable number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Noticeable missing information and sources; problems with the lead and organization.
- D:** Significant number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Significant missing information and sources; Significant problems with the lead and organization.
- F:** Misspelling of proper names. Other major spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Almost total lack of information and sources; Severe problems with the lead and organization.

### Grading Points

100-94:	A
93-90:	A-
89-88:	B+
87-83:	B
82-80:	B-
79-78:	C+
77-73:	C
72-70:	C-
69-68:	D+
67-64:	D
62-60:	D-
59-0:	F

### Deadlines

Deadlines are important in the professional world, and you will be required to file assignments on time. Late assignments will drop one letter grade each day they are filed past deadline. The instructor does not accept assignments by e-mail without prior approval.

## **Style and Spelling**

It is important that you learn proper newspaper style, so refer often to your Associated Press Stylebook. Spelling and grammar are equally important. Your grade will suffer if your copy contains style and spelling errors.

## **Professionalism**

This class is run like a place of business; treat it as if it were your job. You will be expected to display a respectable level of professionalism by attending class regularly, arriving prepared for class, paying attention during lectures and participating in discussions. Frequent absences will result in a lower grade. Showing up on time also is crucial, since much material will be covered in lectures and writing labs. It is important to be on time. Tardiness will be taken into consideration when computing your final grade. If you're expecting to be absent or late, please email me before class, the same practice as if you were holding a job. Lastly, to help create a positive learning community, put your cell phones and mobile devices away and cease social networking activities.

## **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher
- Providing information to another student during an examination
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material

- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://luc.edu/english/writing.shtml#source>.

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

A complete description of the School of Communication Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <http://www.luc.edu/soc/Policy.shtml>.

## **Tentative Schedule (subject to change)**

### **Week 1, August 28, 30**

#### **Tuesday**

Introduction and syllabus overview.

Read: WWB Part 1-2, AP A-F

Assignment: "ID 3 examples of bad About Pages from NRF Directory (Due 8-30)

#### **Thursday**

Introduction. Review bad About Pages and their ties to the larger problem. WWB introduction.

AP A-F questions

Assignment: Write two About Pages as described in assignment (Due 9-4)

### **Week 2, September 4, 6**

#### **Tuesday**

Client objectives, audiences and how PR writing moves companies closer to their goals; why we are hired! Tips for writing shorter

Read: WWB Part 3-4, AP G-L

Assignment: Front load a subject and explanation of Samsung investigation (In class)

#### **Thursday**

Messaging as the foundation for all writing; how to gather and refine.

AP G-L questions.

Assignment: Extract key messages from EdTech Digest article

### **Week 3, September 11, 13**

#### **Tuesday**

WWB Change What You Write. Multiple categories of content

Read: AP M-R

Assignment: Outline content categories for your Samsung communication (In class)

#### **Thursday**

Message development

AP M-R questions.

Assignment: Write company message objectives (Due 9-18)

Quiz #1: AP A-F, WWB Part 2

### **Week 4, September 18, 20**

#### **Tuesday**

Introduction to news release purpose, components, format, procedures for gathering information and drafting.

Read: AP S-Z

Assignment: New product news release (Due 9-20)

**Thursday**

The appeal of statistics- and study-based news releases, their purpose and format.  
AP S-Z questions  
Assignment; Stats-based news release on Acme Corp. Vacation Habits (Due 9-25)

**Week 5, September 25, 27**

**Tuesday**

Introduction to features and bylines  
Assignment: Edit "Innovation Legislation" release to remove jargon (In class)  
Assignment: Three questions for Josh Bernoff (Due 9-27)

**Thursday**

Introduction to Fact Sheets  
Assignment: Write "Grass-Needling" and "SOC" fact sheets (Due 10-2)

**Week 6, October 2, 4**

**Tuesday**

In-class Q&A with WWB author Josh Bernoff  
Assignment: Josh Bernoff news release (Due 10-4)

**Thursday**

Introduction to the FAQ  
Assignment: Write "Market Town" FAQ (Due 10-9)

**Week 7, October 9, 11**

**Tuesday**

**Mid-Semester Break = No Class**

**Thursday**

Introduction to case studies, their purpose, audience, target media, formula  
Assignment: Analyze multiple case studies for style, format, content (In class)

**Week 8, October 16, 18**

**Tuesday**

In-class presentation / interview with case study subject  
Assignment: Case study (Due 10-23)  
Quiz #2: AP G-L

**Thursday**

Keeping it tight with editing  
Assignment: Edit article to tighten (In class)

**Week 9, October 23, 25**

**Tuesday**

Rewriting and repurposing

Assignment: Rewrite feature for blog post (Due 10-25)

Quiz #3: AP M-R, WWB Part 3

**Thursday**

Writing for the ear; audio and video

Assignment: Audio PSA written and audio file (Due 10-30)

**Week 10, October 30, November 1**

**Tuesday**

Blog planning: Discussion of how to create a blog concept

Assignment: Create a concept for personal blog on a subject that interests you (Due 11-1)

**Thursday**

Pitching media; in-class discussion with SP+A associate

Assignment: Media pitch for new company/concept (Due 11-6)

**Week 11, November 6, 8**

**Tuesday**

Media take on pitching; in-class discussion with reporter

Assignment: Blog post on how to pitch a feature (Due 11-8)

**Thursday**

Introduction to infographics

Read: Ted Talk Video on Data Visualization

Assignment: Identify and review four effective infographics (Due 11-13)

**Week 12, November 13, 15**

**Tuesday**

Introduction to speeches and speech writing

Assignment: Write persuasive speech (Due 11-15)

Quiz #4: AP S-Z

**Thursday**

Introduction to presentations

Assignment: PowerPoint presentation (Due 11-27)

**Week 13, November 20, 22**

**Thanksgiving Break = No Class**



**Week 14, November 27, 29**

**Tuesday**

Student presentations part 1

Assignment: Portfolio (Due 12-4)

**Thursday**

Student presentations part 2

**Week 15, December 4, 6**

**Tuesday**

Working with ad agencies; in-class discussion with ad exec

**Thursday**

Final instructor – student Q&A on the business of public relations.  
(Refreshments will be served)

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