

PR (351A): Strategic Public Relations Media

4 Units

Fall 2016—Tuesdays—6 p.m.– 9:20 p.m.

Section: 21192

Location: ANN 309

Instructor: Kate Flynn Jacobs

Office: Tuesdays, 5:30 p.m., ANN 309, or by appointment

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I. Course Description

Today's public relations professional needs to understand and be competent in many forms of communication. The business world they work in is rapidly evolving with earned, owned and paid media converging. Media relations, social media content creation and influencer engagement, and paid media are now equally important for any organization's strategic communications. The role of the public relations practitioner has changed to reflect this shift and training needs to include intensive writing plus creating high-quality multimedia content for traditional, emerging and social media.

This class is an intensive, hands-on course designed to provide students with the skills necessary to engage with, and produce compelling content for, contemporary media channels of all types.

What defines the media: Who are they? What do they do? How do they get their stories? What tools are needed in today's media environment? How do we best engage media in today's environment of media convergence?

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

This class will provide an understanding of how to write and produce content and tools used to engage traditional and emerging media. We will examine the rapidly changing fields of digital media and their roles in the relationship between public relations and the modern media.

In this class, the emphasis will be on writing and actual content production such as short interview videos and photos that tell a story and enhance your overall communications strategy.

The success of the public relations professional has as much to do with writing ability as anything else. The ability to write well, write creatively, to capture the attention of your audience is essential for an exceptional career. Writing skills are the essence of being an excellent content creator.

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Identify an array of traditional and emerging print, broadcast and online media outlets and understand their inner workings.
- Craft and pitch a story to any of the aforementioned media, with a keen understanding of what constitutes "news" for every type of audience.
- Write materials and create content for both media outlets and general audiences.
- Prepare a detailed media relations plan that reflects an understanding of the role of integrated strategy and effective targeting of the audience, message and outlet.

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:

1. Class starts at on time. Chronic tardiness will affect your final grade, as will absences. You don't have to ask me for permission to miss a class, leave early or come late, or provide a written excuse. I leave those decisions to you. You receive no credit for in-class work that day. There is no make-up for material we cover in a class you miss.
2. Assignments are due to me at the time I designate. All assignments will be complete and typed, with no handwritten edits. Assignments completed not following directions will be graded lower. If you are absent, you are responsible for getting me your homework by the due date/time. **No late assignments are accepted.**
3. There will be no make-ups for the mid-term. There will be no extensions for the final project. You must complete the mid-term and final project to pass the class.
4. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a fellow student. I do not email notes or handouts.
5. Class participation is expected and will help your final grade. Everyone is expected to contribute. Lack of participation will reduce your participation grade.
6. No texting or any use of cell phones or other forms of electronic communication during class. Doing so will have a negative impact on your grade. Computers for class work ONLY.
7. There should only be one discussion going on at a time in class. Paying attention to the speaker, whether it is the instructor, fellow student or guest is a sign of respect and professionalism. Disruptive behavior, such as talking out of turn and carrying on side conversations, will negatively impact your grade.
8. The syllabus is our guideline and will change during the course of the semester to accommodate current events and speaker schedules.
9. You are expected to check Blackboard every week for updates on homework and assignments. I will post the week's homework within 24 hours of our last class. You are also responsible for checking your USC email account, which is how I will communicate with you.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME:

1. I am open to your questions and welcome the opportunity to discuss any issues concerning you. Please don't hesitate to talk to me.
2. I am fair. When you get a paper back from me, you'll have a good idea why you earned the grade you did and what can be done to improve your writing. However, if things are not clear, let's talk. The more discussion, the better the understanding.
3. This syllabus is a general guideline for what we will cover during the semester. Other assignments, such as written homework and class projects will be assigned. In addition, we will have in-class writing most weeks.
4. I'll guide you along to improve your writing, but feel free to help guide our discussions. Bring to class your questions, observations and opinions about how you see the role of public relations at work in the real world. Our most pertinent and interesting class time will come from what's happening in our world today.
5. I am available for questions and conversations before and after class and by appointment. Ready access is through email. I will respond to all messages within 24 hours, unless my message service indicates otherwise.

III. Description of Assignments

- In-class assignments
- Take-home writing assignments
- Mid-Term Examination
- Final project: online newsroom
- Participation
- Reading

IV. Grading Breakdown

- Writing assignments 25%
- Mid-Term Exam 15%
- Final Project 35%

- Homework 15%
- Participation 10%

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| A Range (A=95-100 A-=90-94) | Writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited material. All required elements included (catchy headline, solid lead, varied vocabulary; supporting facts/figures; quotes as required). Excellent organization and flow; original thinking. Showed creativity in packaging/distribution method. High end of scale: publishable today as is. Made me want to keep reading! You will not get in the A range if you have any misspelled words. |
| B Range (B+=87-89 B=84-86 B-=80-83) | Two-five spelling, grammar or AP Style mistakes. One or more required elements missing or poorly displayed (i.e., boring headline; confusing lead, etc.). Shows potential as a good writer. Adhered to inverted pyramid. High end of scale will have at least one extraordinary element such as astonishing lead or little-known facts or pithy quote. Some creativity shown. |
| C Range (C+=77-79 C=74-76 C-=70-73) | More than five errors (spelling, grammar, AP style). Poorly edited and/or proofread. May have adhered to inverted pyramid but strayed at beginning or end. Hackneyed elements such as trite headline or uninteresting lead. Little or no facts/figures included. Passive rather than active verbs become the norm. Little or no creativity. |
| D Range (D+=66-69 D=63-65 D-=56-62) | More than 10 errors (spelling, grammar). Needs to be completely rewritten. Poorly organized with little or no understanding of journalistic style/standards. Needs to work with writing coach. |
| Failing: (F=55 or below) | Not rewritable or no assignment turned in. |

V. Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are due on the dates specified. Without prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will not be accepted.

VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

1. You must bring your laptop to every class. I advise you to bring a charger as well. If you cannot complete the in-class assignments, you will receive no credit.
2. *"The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law."* Associated Press, 2014
3. Dictionaries and other writing references are indispensable. You need to have easy access to one or more guides to spelling, grammar, punctuation and writing style. *"Woe is I"* by Patricia O'Connor and *"The Elements of Style"* by Strunk and White are among the best of the shorter volumes.

Please bring these to class each week, as you will need them for in-class writing exercises. As needed, additional reading assignments will be given during the semester.

Make a news outlet your opening Web page. Be familiar with a wide array of news media and be up on current events.

VII. Laptop Policy

Effective fall 2014, all undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the Annenberg [Virtual Commons](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

VIII. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Aug. 23/WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION. A LOOK AT MEDIA CHANNELS and PACKAGING OF MATERIALS

- Housekeeping: Presentation of syllabus. Going over class requirements and outlining of what to expect over the semester.
- Down to business: Beginning to define who are the media and what do they need or want with the public relations professional.
- Summary of strategic media channels used by public relations – traditional, emerging tradigital, social and owned.
- Discuss the need to create content for all of these channels through a strategic communication process: Developing target audiences, messaging and connecting with appropriate channels.

In class:

- Review news releases.
- Write news release.

Homework:

- Bring a news story you think was run as a result of a PR pitch. Type a brief (one to two paragraphs) explanation. You can attach the article or include a link.

Aug. 30/WEEK 2: MEDIA COLLATERAL – THE NEWS RELEASE AND BEYOND

- Discussion of the fundamentals of good writing and how to fine-tune your press release; paying attention to details.
- Packaging of materials: First the news release and then what? Fact sheets and Advisories

In class:

- Advisory

Homework:

- Create a list of materials beyond the release, fact sheet and advisory you would create in order to enhance your news release story.
- Fact sheet.

Sept. 6/WEEK 3: ADVANCED MESSAGING AND AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

- Review homework.
 - Discuss the perceived target audience for the PR news stories brought to class.
 - Identify key messages aimed at audience
 - Discuss why the story was carried by specific outlets
- Development of target audience, creation of messages to connect with specific audiences and the choice of outlets to reach each audience segment.

In class:

- Take any of the stories addressed in class and develop a different audience and messaging structure for the story.
- Look at online newsrooms and the bios they publish.
- Write bio.

Homework:

- Write a personal bio. Bring a personal photo to use on bio page.

Sept. 13/WEEK 4: MULTIMEDIA CONTENT AS A PR TOOL

- The news release has evolved from the traditional written media relations tool to a complex multi-media advocacy tool to promote an individual, company, non-profit or government's position.

In class:

- Backgrounders.
- Review online newsrooms.
- Create WordPress site.
- Create bio page.

Homework:

- Post your news release to your WP site. Include multimedia.
- Write a backgrounder.

Sept. 20/WEEK 5: ONLINE NEWS ROOMS

- What do they look like; what's in them; who uses them and why?
- How to create a digital press kit and develop an effective online newsroom.
- Creating posts and pages, inserting multimedia, using links, theme design, creating menus and sub-menus.

In class:

- Create a WP page for fact sheet and include multimedia.

Sept. 27/WEEK 6: ONLINE STORYTELLING

- We'll examine myriad ways to enhance your story: blogs, features, op-eds. What are the differences, what are they used for, and when to use them.
- Creating materials for a variety of platforms: print, web, social media.

In Class:

- Features worksheet.
- Write a feature.

Homework: Finish your feature. Bring to class next week.

**Oct. 4/WEEK 7: DEVELOPMENT OF A PRESS/INFORMATION KIT –
HOW DO WE DELIVER INFORMATION FOR MEDIA TO REPORT?**

- While the press release is an important component in your media relations toolbox, equally important are the ancillary materials that reporters use. To be viewed as a valued resource,

you must also know how to prepare other materials to tell your story: Feature stories, backgrounders, bios – other ways to hook the media.

In class: Op-Ed

Homework: Mid-term next week. Bring laptops and chargers.

Oct. 11/WEEK 8: MID-TERM

- In-class writing exam: Writing of elements covered in class to date.

Homework:

- Bring to class a photo that ran in an online news site, newspaper or magazine that you think was PR provided. Type up a brief explanation of why you did or did not like it or think it was effective.
- Bring to class your smartphone and a connector for the class computer.

Oct. 18/WEEK 9: STORYTELLING WITH VISUALS

- In class review of monumental photographs that impacted history and examine the content, message and placement of those photos.
- The art of media image storytelling, writing compelling titles and photo captions.

In class:

- Review of photos from homework
- Take an effective photo, edit it, and write a caption and post to blog.

Homework:

- Watch online video tutorial *iMovie '09 Essential Training* on Lynda.com.

Oct. 25/WEEK 10: CREATION OF B-ROLL VIDEO

- A summary of video production techniques using modern HD video cameras including mobile phones, SLRs, etc.
- An overview of editing techniques for non-professional editing programs such as iMovie.
- What makes effective video?

In class:

- Creation of b-roll

Homework:

- Polish b-roll and post to WP site.

Nov. 1/WEEK 11: ADVANCED VIDEO

- Beyond b-roll: interviews.

In class: Interview a classmate and gather b-roll.

Homework: Create video package of classmate interview.

Nov. 8/WEEK 12: PITCHING THE MEDIA/ INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

- How and when to talk to the media; what media to target; how to get your story delivered.
- How to prepare for an interview. How to develop key messages. How to weave main points into responses. How to deal with the tough questions.

In Class: Write an email pitch.

Homework:

- Leave a voicemail pitch.

Nov. 15/WEEK 13: MEDIA EVENTS AND PRESENTATION SKILLS

- Media Events: press conferences, parties, press events. When to use them, when to avoid them and how to throw them.
- What works and, almost as importantly, what doesn't. Giving the media materials flexibility to meet the needs of different audiences.
- The relationship between the public relations and the media. Tools for working with the media.
- How to talk to the media; when to talk to the media; what media to target; how to get your story delivered. Making sure your pitch isn't the tree that falls in the forest when no one is in the forest.

In class: Presentation training.

Nov. 22/WEEK 14: INTEGRATING MEDIA COMPONENTS INTO A ROBUST CROSS-PLATFORM CAMPAIGN

- You've developed all your media materials and had your media event, now let's amplify, aggregate and curate across our social and owned media channels.

Homework: Work on final project.

Nov. 29/WEEK 15: FINAL PROJECTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Final projects are due. You are expected to present your project at this session.

Dec. 13: FINAL 7 p.m.

Review of semester and final projects.

IX. Policies and Procedures

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned in to the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism.” All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

b. Support Systems

Equity and Diversity

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or

to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <https://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources.

Support with Scholarly Writing

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.

Students requesting test-related accommodations will need to share and discuss their DSP recommended accommodation letter/s with their faculty and/or appropriate departmental contact person at least three weeks before the date the accommodations will be needed. Additional time may be needed for final exams. Reasonable exceptions will be considered during the first three weeks of the semester as well as for temporary injuries and for students recently diagnosed. Please note that a reasonable period of time is still required for DSP to review documentation and to make a determination whether a requested accommodation will be appropriate.

Stress Management

Students are under a lot of pressure. If you start to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge.

Emergency Information

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

X. About Your Instructor

Kate Flynn Jacobs is a communications consultant specializing in strategic planning, writing communications and media training. Her more than 30 years of experience includes media relations, speechwriting, communications planning, crisis communications, annual report writing, and corporate newspaper editing. She has won awards from the Public Relations Society of American and the International Association of Business Communicators. For 15 years, she has taught at USC's Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, focusing on Public Relations theory and writing courses.