



**PR 351B Strategic Public Relations Media
and Content
4 Units**

Fall 2020 – Thursdays — 9-12:20 p.m.

Section: 21204D

Location: ANN 406 and online

Instructor: Stefan Pollack

Office: ANN room or meeting area

Office Hours: Per request.

Contact Info: stefan@pollackgroup.com,
310-780-2364 (Mobile).

I. Course Description

In this class, we will examine media that is created and published by today's public relations practitioner. New platforms have enabled brands, organizations and individuals to become publishers and directly engage their audiences. This class examines strategies and tactics needed to be an effective publisher including digital content created for social and owned media channels.

This course is designed to teach students about the array of public relations tools available to them, with particular emphasis on writing, digital content creation and production of communications collateral. Students will be exposed to audience research and segmentation, social media and digital communications writing, multi-media content creation, feature writing, newsletter preparation, basic principles of design, writing for the ear, creating and making presentations and brainstorming. Case histories will illuminate the use of these tools and examples of materials will be used extensively throughout the course. This is a lab course; a great deal of hands-on activities such as writing, graphic design, video production and oral presentations will be assigned.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

Students will leave this course prepared to:

- Research, write and edit professional-quality social media content, videos, newsletters, and PR controlled content for external and internal audiences.
- Execute basic promotional video production for product demonstrations, crisis response and other PR driven scenarios.
- Execute basic design and layout; understand design software.
- Produce visual elements such as photos, graphics, infographics, special effects and motion graphics.
- Identify and communicate with an array of audiences.

III. Course Elements:

In-class writing, content creation and video production assignments

- Take-home writing and content creation assignments
- Midterm
- Final project
- Participation
- Reading

IV. Text/Reference Materials

Reading assignments will be posted to Blackboard throughout the semester, along with handouts and other readings.

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:

1. Class starts 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.
2. Assignments are due to me at the time I designate. All assignments will be complete and submitted as directed. Assignments completed that do not follow directions will be graded lower. If you are absent, you are responsible for getting your homework to me by the due date/time. **No late assignments are accepted.**
3. There will be no make-ups for the midterm. There will be no extensions for the final project. You must complete the midterm 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. 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.
6. The syllabus is our guideline and will change during the course of the semester to accommodate current events and speaker schedules
7. You are expected to check Blackboard every week for updates on homework and assignments. 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 love teaching and come to class each week with enthusiasm and a strong desire to help you learn. My goal is to help you prepare for the world of public relations.
2. I am open to your questions and welcome the opportunity to discuss any issues concerning you. Please don't hesitate to speak with me about anything.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

V. Assignments

- In-class assignments
- Take-home writing assignments
- Midterm exam
- Final project: portfolio components
- Participation

VI. 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.

VII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

You must bring your laptop to every class. 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.

VIII. Laptop Policy

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.

IX. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (13 weeks: 8/17/20 – 11/13/20)

Friday, September 4: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 4: Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, September 4: Last day to drop a class and receive a refund to avoid a mark of "W" on student record and STARS report

Friday, September 4: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Friday, October 2: Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript only. Mark of "W" will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three for session 001 (or the 20 percent mark of the session in which the course is offered) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, October 2: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass course to letter grade

Friday, November 6: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

X. Grading Scale & Standards

Breakdown of Grade

- Video Projects 15%
- Writing assignments 20%
- Midterm Exam 20%
- Final Project 35%
- Participation 10%

Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

Grading Standards

“A” projects have 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.

“B” projects have two to 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. Publishable with medium editing.

“C” projects have 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 shown. Publishable with major editing.

“D” projects have 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.

“F” projects are not rewritable, late or not turned in.

XI. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: *Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change – and probably will change – based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.*

Week 1 – 8/20: Presentation of Syllabus; Overview of Class Projects

The syllabus will be presented along with the course description and expectations. We will explore what content creation means for today’s public relations practitioner, how and when it is used, and what forms we will be addressing in class. There will be an overview of final term projects and a quick writing assignment.

In-class assignment: Write a resume cover letter convincing me why you are the ideal candidate for my entry-level job opening. Assume that the employer (me) has reviewed your resume and is deciding whether or not to interview you. How will you introduce yourself with the written word? How will your cover page stand out from the many in my email box? What will get me to read yours?

Homework assignment: *Bring to the next session an example of a piece of content you consider to be “well written.” You should be prepared to discuss why you believe your chosen piece is well written.*

PLEASE NOTE: *you are not doing a big report; I am looking for a general discussion of content, but your comments should center on those elements that led to your choosing this piece.*

Week 2 – 8/27: What Constitutes “Well Written?”

This class will examine the fundamentals of good writing. Is it an exact science? Do we adhere to the strict “inverted pyramid” format you learned in 209 and 351a? The structure of good storytelling will be examined for long-form content, blog posts, and short social media content. Each student will present her/ his selected piece of content from the homework assignment and explain why he/she considers it to be well written. From that discussion, we’ll devise the *Tenants of Good Writing* for this course.

In-class writing assignment: Rewrite your cover letter. Take it to the next level of persuasion, incorporating what you have learned in class.

Homework assignment: Edit two classmates’ letters (save an electronic version – redlined – of your edits). Likewise, incorporate the edits of your letter from two classmates. *Find and bring to next session a piece of content from any source of controlled media that is targeted to ANY specific audience except college students.*

Week 3 – 9/3: Know Thy Audience

Discussion of last week’s in-class writing assignment. To be effective writers and content creators, it is important to understand who you are communicating to and their demographic characteristics. Students will learn how to research and segment audiences.

We’ll explore how GenZ, GenY, GenX differ from Baby Boomers; how age, ethnicity, gender, geography, sexual orientation and culture factor into messaging; and which audiences you will likely encounter in conducting public relations efforts in the field.

In-class assignment: Working in assigned teams, utilize one of the team members’ content from the homework assignment to dissect that piece of content’s specific audience and present your findings to the class.

Homework: Taking the piece of content you brought to class, identify the audience it targets. Then, rewrite the headline and main structure of the copy to take the same content/topic and target it to a completely different audience. You will be asked to hand in the original content in next week’s class. *Find and bring to the next class a persuasive article written for one of the audience groups we discuss in class. Note: it may not be aimed at a college-age audience.*

Week 4 – 9/10: Feature and Persuasive Writing and the Power of the Word

Review last week’s in-class assignment and compare and contrast how audiences were addressed in the content you selected. The written word is very powerful. It can shape *and change* minds. Persuasive writing can initiate action and change. Persuasive, well-written ideas are the essence of multi-media content. We will first review some of the examples of persuasive writing that you brought to class and discuss what makes them – and other forms of communication – persuasive. Also, building on the principles learned in 351A, we will discuss the nuances of feature writing. We’ll discuss human-interest articles, editorial and opinion pieces, humor, irony and an array of feature writing techniques.

In-class assignment: Practice writing strong, compact persuasive copy: develop three to five messages (about two to four sentences in length) for two separate organizations identified by the instructor.

Homework assignment: Write a 400-word post on a topic to be assigned. Also, bring an example of a well-written company blog post to class. *Also, bring an example of a newsletter to class. It can be an electronic or printed.*

Week 5 – 9/17: Controlled Media: Newsletters Brochures

Due to digital advances in both production and printing, online newsletters and brochures are thriving. What are they? Why do they work? Who reads them? When don't they work? How are the digital consumption habits changing the style and content of newsletters and brochures? We will review the newsletters you brought to class and discuss them as a group. We will discuss the fundamentals of newsletter design, layout and distribution.

In-class writing assignment: Create an online newsletter article. Audience and topic: TBD.

Week 6 – 9/24: Writing content for online and social media.

We will review the differences between writing that is meant to live online vs. traditional writing consumed in the physical world. Emphasis will be on content and overall design, with some very basic review of technical challenges and requirements. Tic Tok, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat stories, Instagram and IG Stories, and other social media and online platforms play an important role in communications. We'll examine an array of digital communications to find out what works and what doesn't. We will examine how different organizations – non-profits, consumer brands, advocacy groups – use social media platforms to achieve strategic PR goals. We will explore purpose, audience and voice of social media engagement across different platforms and organization sectors.

In-class assignment: Practice writing short Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and blog posts for the assigned organizations. Posts must include original content, curated links and multi-media embeds.

*** Be prepared discuss the details for your final project during this class session.**

Week 7 – 10/1: Midterm

Speed is of the essence sometimes in PR. The world we live in requires practitioners to be able to develop content and get it out quickly across many platforms, since conversations, promotions, and crisis occur in real time.

Part 1 - write a 450-word feature on a subject to be assigned by the instructor.

Part 2 - write a 30, 110- and 220-word count versions of the feature.

Week 8 – 10/8: Principles of Layout and Design – InDesign Tutorial

This session was developed to help you communicate with professional designers in the language they understand and to prepare you for working with them.

In-class workshop We will learn some of the basic elements of design during this hands-on workshop. You'll learn InDesign, how to import photos/images, work with text and how to select and use color. You will design do a mock design in class.

Week 9 – 10/15: Relevance Report Lecture

The annual Relevance Report from the USC Center for Public Relations identifies emerging issues and forecasts topics and trends impacting society, business, and communications in the coming year. The lecture features and highlights the report from PR industry leaders, and USC academics.

In-class assignment: Write and design a piece that showcases the top 5-7 takeaways from the 2021 Relevance Report.

Week 10 – 10/22: Data Visualization

During this class session, we also will explore visual literacy and we will discuss and understand why it is important to visualize data and how best to apply the various tools used to do it.

In-class assignment: We will design an infographic that incorporates builds off of data presented in class.

Week 11 – 10/29: Video Production I: Storyboarding

For this class session, we will begin our module on Video Production by starting with the storyboard. Most PR videos don't just evolve; they are based on careful planning. Students will be given a scenario and will work in groups of two to draft a video script.

In-class assignment: You'll create a storyboard with a classmate.

Homework assignment: Finalize your video script and be prepared to produce the video in the next class.

Homework: Work on your term project. Review sections from online iMovie video tutorials on both on LinkedIn Learning and on AnnenbergDL.org

**** Be prepared to share content details for your final project during this class session.***

Week 12 – 11/5: Video Production II. Shooting

This class we will demonstrate video shooting techniques and present an array of equipment and tools for shooting video with your smart phone!

In-class assignment: Working with your partner, you will travel around campus shooting your group video (based upon your united storyboard). Return to the classroom to discuss any additional shooting requirements and to share your experiences. Finalize video and post to your YouTube channel.

Week 13 – 11/12: Bringing it all together

Each student will create an individual blog showcasing all your work over the semester. You will design and add all the written and multi-media content developed during the semester. Students can modify and add content to improve the posts, graphics or video content.

Homework: Continue development of final project. Finalize your term project.

Final Exam Period – 8/19, 8-10 a.m.: Presentation of Term Projects & Final Term Projects Due

Students present Term Projects.

Final Term Project – PR 351B

For your term project, you may choose among the topics provided to you to create a complete portfolio. The purpose of the project is for you to have the experience of producing public relations materials that can be powerful additions to your portfolio.

You will be expected to:

- Research and write all copy
- Design and produce a mock copy of your chosen project
- Present your project to the class

The final project will include the following requirements:

- A 3-5-minute presentation that will include visual aids and an embedded video of no less than 1-minute in length
- Elements to showcase design skills: At least one of the following: Infographic, social media content, promotional flyer, etc.
- A 300-500-word feature. Headline and keywords to be included.
- A newsletter, a brochure, a website.

You will be producing all materials from scratch. This means you will gather information about the chosen organization or company; write all copy; select graphic elements (photos, charts, logo, graphs, illustrations); determine where all the copy and graphics will go in the final piece; and, prepare an 6-8-minute presentation in which you discuss the overall project, the challenges you faced and any recommendations you might have for your classmates.

There are checkpoints indicated on your syllabus to help you stay on track.

Helpful Hints:

- Identify your organization and get materials early in the semester.
- Don't wait until the last minute to design/format/produce your project.
- Don't go to Kinko's or another printer the day before your project is due.
- Plan ahead!

XII. 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 into the

instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism or public relations class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, 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

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Breaking Bread Program [undergraduate students only]

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/>

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally “breaking bread” over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.

XIII. About Your Instructor

Stefan Pollack is president of **The Pollack Group**, an integrated public relations and marketing firm with offices in Los Angeles and New York. For 31 years, he has managed clients in many sectors ranging from consumer products and professional services to technology and nonprofit. He has served as president of the Public Relations Society of America, Los Angeles Chapter and as chair of the Americas Region Board for **The Worldcom Public Relations Group (Worldcom)**, a global partnership of independent public relations firms. He is currently the global marketing chair for Worldcom. Since 2001, he has taught as an adjunct professor at USC Annenberg. He is the author of ***Disrupted***, *From GenY to iGen: Communicating with the Next Generation* and is a member of the **Forbes Agency Council** where he is often quoted and writes on the topics of social media, PR, marketing, and communications. In 2019, Pollack and his agency established the **Noemi Pollack Scholarship** at USC’s Center for Public Relations, which annually awards a partial tuition scholarship to an undergraduate student pursuing a major or minor in public relations.