



**PR 352: Public Relations Media and
Content for Non-Majors
4 Units**

Fall 2020 – Thursdays – 2-5:20 p.m.

Section: 21208R

Location: ANN 413 and Online

Instructor: Stefan Pollack

Office: ANN classroom or lobby

Office Hours: By appointment only

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I. Course Description

Today's public relations professional needs to understand and be competent in myriad forms of communication. The business world they work in is constantly evolving with the convergence of paid, earned, shared and owned media. The role of the public relations practitioner has changed to reflect this shift and training needs to include intensive writing plus creation of high-quality multimedia content for traditional and emerging media.

Building on the PR writing standards that students mastered in their PR 209 course, PR 352 gives students the opportunity to apply those standards to earned and controlled media. The foundation of the course is to build content in the PR world. Students will learn advanced writing and editing, basic design skills and video planning, shooting, editing and production skills, all with an eye toward devising persuasive content.

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.

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Craft standard materials for earned and owned media
- Execute basic design and layout skills
- Shoot, edit basic videos
- Determine which are the best tools for specific communications needs
- Demonstrate their understanding of news judgment and other content decision-making

III. Description of Assignments

Students are required to bring their laptops to every class session. Every session includes an in-class assignment that the student will execute with instant feedback from the instructor. Each week, the professor will provide an in-depth review of the previous week's homework assignments, then, she will introduce new writing or content elements. It is not unusual for the coursework to be slowed down sometime during the semester as students learn to perfect the Inverted Pyramid, Hourglass feature structure, basic AP style guidelines, write in active (not passive) voice, edit and proofread their work, and understand how the content they are devising fits into the PR realm. These assignments culminate in a comprehensive electronic information kit (on an organization designated by the instructor) that

demonstrates a thorough understanding of the principles and techniques taught throughout the semester.

WRITING EXERCISES and CONTENT ASSIGNMENTS

Writing and producing content on deadline is an essential skill for public relations as well as other fields. Students need to be able to do assignments in Microsoft Word or a similar program and type fast. Smartphones will be used for individual video shooting, then students will visit the PR pod in the Media Center to learn iMovie editing skills. Writing assignments must be double-spaced. Leave blank space and margins to allow space for editing comments.

FINAL PROJECT

Students will devise a comprehensive Information Kit that includes:

- Blog and Feature
- FAQ
- Infographic
- 60- to 90-second video

IV. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
In-class, homework assignments & quizzes	40%
Midterm	25%
Final	35%
TOTAL	100%

In this course, Participation is factored into your in-class work as well as your comments/questions related to the writing assignments. A separate grading rubric will be provided for your Final Project.

b. Grading Scale/Standards

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

“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.

In addition, we maintain the highest standards of ethical writing/editing. The following are some other circumstances that would warrant a grade of “F” and potential USC/Annenberg disciplinary action:

- Fabricating a story or making up quotes or information (unless you are specifically assigned to insert fictional facts/quotes by your instructor for learning purposes)
- Plagiarizing an article, part of a script/article or information from any source. This includes improper attribution, lifting ideas from another source and/or representing any work as your own.
- Missing a deadline.

WRITING COACHES

ASC employs writing coaches available for students who need additional writing advice/aid. Jennifer Floto is the designated coach for SPR but you are welcome to meet with others as well.

V. Assignment Submission Policy

A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will automatically be given a grade of F. **I do not accept make-up assignments.**

B. Assignments must be submitted via email either at the end of a class session or by the due date specified on the syllabus.

C. Video assignments will be uploaded via Vimeo or YouTube and submitted to the instructor via email or Blackboard as specified.

A note about attendance: Class time and timeliness are important. If you are late, YOU are responsible for finding out what was missed. The instructor won't repeat advice, quizzes or explanations. Missing a single class is 7% of the term. Because much of the learning takes place in class and participation counts toward the grade, lateness or an absence can adversely affect your final grade.

VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

1. *"The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law."* Latest edition preferred.
***Required** You are allowed to utilize the online version BUT in my experience, it helps to have the hard copy with you while executing in-class assignments.
2. *How to Shoot Great iPhone Videos*, www.businessinsider.com
3. *10 Video Production Tips*, www.ragan.com
4. Newspapers, magazines, trade publications, websites and other publications as required by assignments or your own interests. In particular, you must be a registered user of latimes.com, which is free. See the press releases services described at <http://www.latimes.com/pressreleases>. You should be familiar with <http://www.prnewswire.com>, <http://www.businesswire.com> and other press release services.
5. Some assignments will require pre-work on **LinkedIn Learning**. The instructor will also arrange with the Digital Lounge for students to enroll in **InDesign** and **WordPress** tutorials as needed.

6. ADDITIONAL READINGS

It's impossible to learn about writing and improve your writing skills without reading topical news and feature writing and watching quality news broadcasts. It's also important to be aware of news, government, history and media. If you don't already do so, plan to be a regular reader of newspapers, magazines, specialized publications and websites as well as a listener of radio and television news. I expect students to be intellectually curious about how media is evolving and how stories get told. My recommendation after 30+ years as a PR practitioner and 17+ as a writing teacher: READ A BOOK! Try mine out on GenZ www.disruptedbook.com

Traditional Media

The Los Angeles Times

and at least one other newspaper such as *NY Times*

One news magazine such as *TIME*

Watch television news, magazine and interview shows

Listen to radio news and talk radio (*KNX, NPR*)

Digital Media

Daily Beast

techcrunch.com

Huffington Post

Mashable

Owned Media Examples

Cisco (<https://newsroom.cisco.com/>)

Coca-Cola (<https://www.coca-colacompany.com/>)

Paid Media Examples

Taboola (<https://www.taboola.com/>)

Outbrain (<https://www.outbrain.com/>)

VII. 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 Digital Lounge](#) for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's [Information Technology Services](#) website.

VIII. 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

IX. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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. Review and introduction to the Cloverleaf and PESO model.

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? 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: Intro to PR Messaging and Audience Segmentation

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.

In-class writing exercise: Craft different core message points targeted to key audiences.

Writing homework: Create a backgrounder from core messages.

Week 4 – 9/10: Press Kits; FAQs and Fact Sheets

Review backgrounder assignments. Overview of press kits. How do print versions differ from online ones? How does a reporter use the information? Which press materials components are imperative, and which are just "nice to have?"

In-class writing exercise: write an FAQ, then a fact sheet from the material supplied by the instructor.

Writing homework: Finalize your FAQ and fact sheet.

Week 5 – 9/17: Media Relations

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 assignment: Write an email pitch and leave a voicemail pitch.

Week 6 – 9/24: Controlled Media: Newsletters, Brochures

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 exercise: Two 300-word features and create an email newsletter.

Week 7 – 10/1: 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. TikTok, 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.

Week 8 – 10/8: Midterm Exam

Homework: Bring to class a photo that ran in an online news site, newspaper or magazine that you think was PR provided. Come prepared to discuss why you did or did not like it or think it was effective.

Week 9 – 10/15: Principles of Visual Storytelling

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 assignment: Review of photos from homework. Take effective photos, edit it, and write captions.

Week 10 – 10/22: 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.

Homework: Review at least three corporate-style videos of your choice and note the messaging and production values.

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

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: Presentation of Final Projects

You will proudly show your classmates your completed press materials and promotional components to support your campaign.

Final Exam Period – Tues., 11/17, 2-4 p.m.: Summative Experience

Final memo due.

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.*

X. 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://annenberg.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.

XI. 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.