

Fall 2021 – Thursdays – 2:30-5:50 p.m.

Section: 21192D

Location: ANN 307

Instructor: Kate Flynn Jacobs

Office: ANN 307

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-2:30 p.m., or by appointment for a Zoom conference at <https://calendly.com/kfj>

Contact Info: kfj@usc.edu, (email is best); 626-487-2444 (if you text me, please identify yourself)

Course Description

This course is step two of a three-part public relations writing journey that starts with PR 209 and concludes with PR 351B. Building on the PR writing standards that students mastered in their PR 209 course, PR 351A will develop more strategic communications and varied storytelling with a greater degree of difficulty.

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.

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. We delve into: 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?

Student Learning Outcomes

This class will provide an understanding and ability of how to write and produce content used to engage traditional and emerging media. The emphasis will be on writing and actual content production such as short interview videos and photos that tell a story in order to enhance overall communications strategies.

The success of the public relations professional relies on professional writing proficiency. The ability to write well and creatively to capture the attention of your audience is essential for an exceptional career. Writing skills are the essence of being a substantive and strategic content creator.

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

- a) Identify an array of traditional and emerging print, broadcast and online media outlets and understand their inner workings.
- b) Craft and pitch a story to any of the aforementioned media, with a keen understanding of what constitutes news for every type of audience.
- c) Write materials and create content for both media outlets and general audiences.
- d) 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.

Course Notes

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:

1. Class starts at on time. Chronic tardiness will affect your participation grade, as will absences. You don't have to ask me for permission to miss class, leave early or come late. I leave those decisions to you; however, you will lose participation points. There is no make-up for in-class work for missed classes.
2. If you are requesting an excused absence, you must provide documentation before.
3. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a fellow student. I do not email notes or handouts.
4. Assignments are due at the time I designate. Assignments 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.
5. 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.
6. Class participation is expected and will help your final grade. Everyone is expected to contribute. Lack of participation will reduce your participation grade. Hearing from each of you makes for a more enriching class for all of us.
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. The homework schedule will be reflected on BlackBoard.

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, email me or call me. Never hesitate to reach out.
2. I am fair. When you get an assignment back from me, you should 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. There will be in-class writing, homework and other assignments. Feel free to suggest topics that are of interest to you and I will do my best to incorporate those ideas into assignments so that we can broaden our horizons into more diverse storytelling.
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. Best access is via email. I will respond to messages within 24 hours, unless my message service indicates otherwise.

Description of Assignments

- In-class assignments/homework
- Take-home writing assignments
- Participation
- Midterm: In-class writing exam
- Final project: Online Newsroom

Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Participation	10%
In-class Assignments/Homework	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Writing assignments	25%
Final Project	35%
TOTAL	100%

b. 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

c. Grading Standards

<p>A Range: Writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited 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.</p> <p>B Range: 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.</p> <p>C Range: 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.</p> <p>D Range: 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.</p> <p>Failing: Not rewritable or no assignment turned in.</p>

Assignment Submission Policy

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

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 AP Stylebook," 55th Edition, 2020-2022*
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.
4. As needed, additional reading assignments will be given during the semester.
5. Make a news outlet your opening page. Be familiar with a wide array of news media and current events.

Additionally, please watch, listen and read the following:

Traditional Media

- The Los Angeles Times and The New York Times
- One news magazine such as TIME
- Follow news outlets on Twitter to stay current
- Listen to radio news and talk radio such as NPR

Owned Media Examples

- [Cisco](https://newsroom.cisco.com/) (<https://newsroom.cisco.com/>)
- [Coca-Cola](https://www.coca-colacompany.com/) (<https://www.coca-colacompany.com/>)

Digital Media

- Daily Beast
- Huffington Post
- Mashable

Paid Media Examples

- [Taboola](https://www.taboola.com/) (<https://www.taboola.com/>)
- [Outbrain](https://www.outbrain.com/) (<https://www.outbrain.com/>)

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.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/23/21 – 12/3/21)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20213/calendar/>

Friday, September 10: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 10: Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, September 10: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Tuesday, September 14: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, October 8: Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript for Session 001. 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 (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, October 8: Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Friday, November 12: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

Saturday, November 13: Last day to change between letter grade or Pass/No pass in a letter graded course for Session 001.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

WEEK 1-Aug. 26: 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.
- 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.
- Recap of news releases and fact sheets

In class:

- Review of news stories on each media channel. How does the traditional mainstream news story compare to tradigital or social media reports? Track coverage of release from PR Newswire.
- Start news release

Homework: News release and fact sheet

WEEK 2-Sept. 2: ADVANCED MESSAGING AND AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

- Review homework.
 - Discuss the perceived target audience for the news release
 - Identify key messages aimed at audience
 - Discuss why the story might be 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.
- Backgrounders

In class:

- Rewrite news release
 - Develop key messages and find specific outlet where you see the story running

Homework: Backgrounder

WEEK 3- Sept. 9: MEDIA COLLATERAL – THE NEWS RELEASE AND BEYOND

- Discussion of the fundamentals of good writing and how to fine-tune your news release; paying attention to details.
- Packaging of materials: First the news release and then what? Review of myriad collateral pieces

Homework:

- Create a list of materials beyond the release and fact sheet you would create in order to enhance your news release story.
- Profile/Bio

WEEK 4- Sept. 16: ONLINE NEWSROOMS & MULTIMEDIA CONTENT AS A PR TOOL

- What do online newsrooms look like; what's in them; who uses them and why?
- How to create a digital press kit and develop an effective online newsroom.
- Defining features: We'll examine myriad ways to enhance your story: bios/profiles, blogs, features, op-eds. What are the differences, what are they used for and when to use them.

In Class: Create WordPress site: pages, inserting multimedia, using links, theme design, creating menus and sub-menus.

Homework:

- Create WordPress pages for your news release, backgrounder and fact sheet
- Opinion Piece

WEEK 5- Sept. 23: CREATING A MEDIA EVENT AND WORKING WITH MEDIA

- 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.

Homework: Advisory

WEEK 6- Sept. 30: Midterm Practice

- Review of tenets of materials written to date
- In-class timed writing practice

Homework: Midterm next week.

WEEK 7- Oct. 7: Midterm

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

WEEK 8-Oct. 14: No Class-Fall Break

Homework for Oct. 21:

- By start of class, upload a photo that ran on an online news site, newspaper or magazine. Type up a brief explanation of why you did or did not like it or think it was effective.
- Bring to class your smartphone or camera as we will be taking and editing photos.

WEEK 9-Oct. 21: 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 WordPress.

WEEK 10-Oct. 28: STORYTELLING THROUGH VIDEO

- What makes effective video? A summary of video production techniques
- An overview of editing techniques for non-professional editing programs such as iMovie.

In class: Creation of b-roll

Homework: Video story

WEEK 11-Nov. 4: ADVANCED STORYTELLING

- Features are more in-depth than traditional news stories and go beyond providing straight facts. These stories are focused more on providing deeper and more personal insight. We will look at human interest stories, personality profiles, trend stories and other ways to add dimension to client communications and audience connection.

Homework: Feature story. Post on WordPress with photos, video, graphics and block quotes.

WEEK 12-Nov. 11: 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.

WEEK 13-Nov. 18: PRESENTATION SKILLS

- Honing your abilities to communicate clearly and with purpose. Preparing key messages *before* you speak in order to highlight the most critical elements you want your audience to remember.
- Techniques to avoid public speaking pitfalls.

In class:

- Presentation practice
- Work on final project websites

Homework: Work on final projects

WEEK 14-Nov. 25: No Class/Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 15-Dec. 2: INTEGRATING MEDIA COMPONENTS INTO A ROBUST CROSS-PLATFORM CAMPAIGN

- Focus on amplifying, aggregating and curating across our social and owned media channels. How to ensure your materials are cohesive and strategically connected to the client objectives.

In class: Working on final project WordPress sites.

Homework: Complete final project.

FINAL EXAM PERIOD Thurs., Dec. 9, from 2-4 p.m.

- Final projects due
- Final summative semester review

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.

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 20 years, she has taught at USC's Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, focusing introductory and advanced Public Relations theory and writing courses for graduate and undergraduate classes. Fíric spraoi ("fun fact" in Irish): She has dual Irish/American citizenship. Her favorite punctuation is the interrobang, the awesome combination of the exclamation point and question mark. 🍀 IE ?

FINAL PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

Create an online newsroom. You will come up with a topic, fact or fiction. You will include any or all the aspects of media collateral we will cover in class, or any other material you consider relevant. Material to consider but not limited to (**items in bold are required**, however, the project must include more than the requirements):

- **News releases: at least one must be included**
- **Video: Required:** No less than 1 minute.
You can use video footage and photos/graphics from outside sources. However, you must create your own video story and not just use a completed piece from elsewhere. **Story creation and video editing must be yours.**
- **Fact sheets: at least one is required**
- Bios/Profiles
- Backgrounders
- Feature stories
- Advisories
- Pitch letters
- Artwork (original creation encouraged)
- Photos/Graphics: **At least three photos and/or graphic design elements must be your own creation.**
- Logos (You may use an existing logo, but I strongly encourage an effort on you creating a new look.)
- **Embed .pdf versions of your media material at the bottom of each page.** This includes releases, fact sheets, advisories, pitch letters.

Expand your content creation to include creative and unique ways to tell your story. It doesn't have to fit the defined pieces listed above. The most successful content is based on creativity and variety. Be sure that your project has depth. This is your chance to show me that you've learned and understood the elements to public relations writing. Don't be superficial and don't be short on your use of collateral material. Make sure your copy is clean. You lose points for sloppy copy. There will be no way you can get an A on this project if you turn in a project that includes spelling, grammar and style errors.

GRADING ELEMENTS:

- Overall design of site: Clean and creative.
- Solid content: Have enough pieces to showcase your topic. Create content with substance and depth.
- Variety: Don't create all your pieces around just one hook. Show that you can develop an array of materials with different storytelling elements. Mix it up with newsworthy, human interest and creative storytelling.
- Quality of writing: pay attention to style, grammar, spelling and formatting. If you have sloppy copy, your grade will be lower.
- Emphasis on creating visually interesting pages. Unlike your 209 projects, which focused on written collateral, this project is meant to combine the importance of writing with the importance of multimedia. As an online newsroom, look to make each page more than just text: include photos, graphics and other visual elements to make the pages interesting. The majority of your pages should be a mix of written and visual content.
- There is no required number of pieces. Develop the stories to spotlight the topic. Somewhere between five and 10. But if you have five, those had better have depth and substance.

REQUIREMENTS:

- News Release: keep in mind who the audience is and what outlet you see your news release running.
- Video of at least a minute in length. One video must be 100 percent your creation. Video, photos and graphics must be yours.
- Navigation bar with at least one pull-down menu.
- Inclusion of photos and graphics. Aside from the video, you may use photos/graphics and logos from other sources. Where you can, add a photo/video credit directly on the page. Do not have every

photo and graphic come from another source. Some visual creation must be your own. At least three photos/graphics/visuals must be your own.

- Embedded pdf versions for standard media relations material (release, fact sheet, advisory, pitch letters).
- Email me with a detailed list of what photos/graphics/videos/logos etc. are entirely your creation and what are taken from outside sources.

SUGGESTION: Create your own idea. Make your own plan to introduce a new restaurant, or launch a new product, or promote a band, for example. In my experience, the more you create your own idea, the stronger your materials. If you are going to choose an already existing topic, I urge you to not rely on materials that have already been created. It's too easy to use turns of phrases, collateral ideas and physical designs that you see in someone else's work. The more you apply your own creativity, the better the product.

All written materials in your project must be written by you. DO NOT include written materials produced, written or created by anyone else. Failure to adhere to this will result in a failing grade.

Due on Tues., Dec. 9 at 2 p.m.

You must email the link to your final project website. In that email, list what graphics/photos/footage are entirely yours.