



PR 209: Effective Writing for Strategic Public Relations and Advertising 4 Units

Fall 2024 – Thursdays – 6-9:20 p.m.

Section: 21070D

Location: ANN 308

Instructor: Dale Legaspi

Office: Classroom or ANN Lobby

Office Hours: Th: 5 p.m. by appointment; virtually by appointment

Contact Info: legaspi@usc.edu, 650-931-7762

Course Description

This is the first course of a three-part journey that includes PR 351a and 351b. PR 209 is an intensive, skills-based writing course designed and focused on preparing and writing materials for use in media relations. It also provides students with the following:

1. Familiarity with proper writing styles with sensitivity to the requirements of media and publications.
2. Competence in writing mechanics and grammar, headlines, labels, structure and the ability to express information clearly to the intended audience(s).
3. Ability to utilize the Inverted Pyramid and prioritize facts.
4. Understanding of how critical persuasive writing is to successful media outreach.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- Write with clarity, insight and skill on deadline
- Judge the importance of information, set priorities and tailor writing to meet the needs of different media and reporters
- Edit and proofread material so it is publishable
- Master the fundamentals of AP Style and inclusive language

Through in-class assignments and homework, students will learn to organize and plan their writing both with and without deadline pressure. Some assignments will cover the essentials of news and the basic building blocks of providing information; others will include elements designed to provide insight for working with the news media.

Students are expected to take on their assignments with a professional attitude and a willingness to learn new techniques. Writing solid media materials takes practice and hard work. ***Based on the progress of each student, certain exercises and/or assignments may be changed.***

Classes **will** include writing exercises and **may also** include a weekly quiz. Some exercises take place during the class and are in addition to take-home assignments. Some writing will be on deadline, which is an essential skill for public relations.

I do not believe that you can be a good writer without reading a lot—try to consume an array of written material each day (which should come naturally, since you should be tracking multiple news sources as an aspiring PR practitioner). Look at whatever piques your interest and/or is most relevant to you (e.g. Eater LA, the Daily Trojan, a major daily newspaper, trade publications or websites relevant to your desired practice area). You must become familiar with <http://www.prnewswire.com> and <http://www.businesswire.com> and other press release services. **(See separate instructions on the PR 209 Brightspace page for free student subscriptions.)**

Course Notes

Be aware that much of this coursework takes place during class, where you will be given a writing assignment and work on it with input from me. An understanding of PR fundamentals is important.

ADVERTISING MODULE: While this course is primarily dedicated to improving your persuasive writing and editing skills, this course will also expose you to PR and Advertising strategies as they relate to messaging and content assignments.

We strongly recommend that you take PR 250 either before or concurrently with PR 209 as we will be drawing on standard PR concepts to craft our materials in this class.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Homework: Various readings, writing assignments (media materials), and/or research. Points are deducted for incomplete assignments and for AP style (Associated Press) errors.

Quizzes: Based on readings, AP Stylebook, grammar and proofreading. Answer keys are used to assess accuracy of quiz answers.

Writing (in-class and homework): Students will draft an array of writing assignments (media materials). Points are deducted for incomplete assignments and for grammar/AP style (Associated Press) errors.

Midterm exam: The exam includes both a “take-home” section and an “in-class” section; the “take-home” section is a writing assignment (create a news release); the “in-class” section is a series of drills to test spelling, grammar, AP style, proofreading and writing assignments. Students must take both sections of the midterm to pass the class.

Class participation: You will receive points for active response to readings, posing questions and comments.

Final project: INFORMATION KIT

By no later than the second class, each student will choose a topic specialty that will be the subject of several assignments and will be related to the final project. The topic should relate to a product or industry you’re interested in as it will need to keep your attention all semester. Remember to keep the scope in mind as you choose (i.e. “Nike” is too general; specialized shoelaces is too narrow a topic).

Throughout the semester, you will be practicing the elements that will eventually comprise your information kit. If you find you are struggling with any of the components, please make an appointment with me to discuss and review the concepts. **Details appear later in this document.**

Grading

a. Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
In-class writing assignments	120	20%
Quizzes (points will vary)	60	10%
Midterm exercise	120	20%
Final project	150	25%
Class participation	90	15%
AP Style/Proofreading/Language Sensitivity	60	10%
TOTAL	600	100%

b. Course Grading Scale

Letter grades and corresponding point value ranges.

Letter grade and corresponding numerical point range		
95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B- (B minus)	67% to 69%: D+ (D plus)
90% to 94%: A- (A minus)	77% to 79%: C+ (C plus)	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+ (B plus)	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D- (D minus)
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C- (C minus)	0% to 59%: F

Writing can be subjective; however, I will be looking for gradual improvement as the semester progresses.

c. Grading Standards

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; quote 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- = 80-82)	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.
C Range (C+ = 77-79 C = 74-76)	More than 5 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.

C- = 70-73)	Little or no facts/figures included. Passive rather than active verbs become the norm. Little or no creativity shown.
D Range (D+ 67-69 D = 64-66 D- 60-63)	More than 10 errors (spelling, grammar). Needs to be completely rewritten. Poorly organized with little or no understanding or journalistic style/standards. Needs to work with writing coach.
Failing (F = 59 or below)	Late, not rewritable or no assignment turned in.

Specific to **Public Relations and Advertising**

“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. A grade of F also will be assigned for any plagiarized and/or fabricated material that is submitted.

d. Grading Timeline

In general, you will probably complete your in-class writing assignments during the course session. However, when extra time is needed, I will provide you with a due date and time.

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments will be created in **Microsoft Word** so that I may edit directly on your work. Assignments not following directions will be graded lower. If you are absent, you are responsible for submitting missed in-class assignments and homework when it is due. **Late assignments can only receive 50% of the allocated points. Assignments more than one week late will receive 0 points.**

Until we all get comfortable with Brightspace, I will expect you to email me your Word document by the stated due date/time. Send them to legaspi@usc.edu. Once we've determined that all students have mastered the basics of our new learning management system, assignments will be submitted on Brightspace.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

1. *Public Relations Writing, Strategies & Structures* by Doug Newsom and Jim Haynes. Wadsworth/Thomson Learning. Eleventh Edition, 2017. (or other more recent edition)
2. *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*. **Latest edition required.** This will be your guidebook for independent study throughout the course.
3. Dictionaries and other writing references are indispensable.
4. It's impossible to learn about writing and improve your writing skills without reading topical news/feature writing and watching quality news broadcasts. You should be familiar with <http://www.prnewswire.com> and <http://www.businesswire.com> and other press release services (**See separate instructions on the PR 209 Brightspace page for free student subscriptions.**)

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: 8/26/2024 – 12/6/2024; Final Exam Period: 12/11-18/2024)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20243/calendar/>

Last day to add: Friday, September 13, 2024

Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W," except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund: Friday, September 13, 2024

Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit: Friday, September 13, 2024 [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Last day to add/drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Audit: Tuesday, September 17, 2024

Last day to withdraw without a "W" on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade: Friday, October 11, 2024 [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.]

Last day to drop with a mark of "W": Friday, November 15, 2024

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/Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 8/29	<p>Fundamentals of Persuasive Writing Introductions, syllabus review. PESO Model overview; What is the Inverted Pyramid?:</p> <p>In-class assignment: Interview a classmate and write a one-page feature (200 words minimum) about her/him/them and submit by the end of this class session.</p>	<p>Look at different types of headlines, sub-heads and lead paragraphs. Be prepared to discuss how editorial writing in news media differs from PR writing.</p> <p>Also for our next class:</p> <p>Readings: Newsom - Ch. 1 Public Relations and the Writer and Ch. 3</p>	

		Writing to Clarify; AP Style - Punctuation Guide, A, B	
Week 2 9/5	<p>Understanding the Media Landscape/Key Messaging</p> <p>An immersive discussion to understand how media outlets operate, what types of stories they look for, and how stories get chosen and created. Then, we will dive right into the elements of key messaging by tackling the first Inverted Pyramid elements: Headlines, Leads.</p>	<p>Write a headline and lead paragraph for each of two news events to be announced.</p> <p>Readings: Newsom - Ch. 6 Research for the PR Writer and Ch.7 Writing to Persuade; AP Style - C, D, E, F</p>	Submit your headlines/leads by 9:00 p.m. on Friday
Week 3 9/12	<p>Key Messaging II</p> <p>We'll review your headlines and leads then move on to the remainder of the Inverted Pyramid: quotations, elaboration graphs and boilerplate.</p> <p>No fluff allowed. We'll practice writing quotes for news releases and corporate statements in a variety of settings.</p> <p>Discussion: Who gets quoted in PR materials? Who gets to talk to the media? What do we think about "No comment"?</p>	<p>Find two (2) news releases on the Internet. Identify what you believe to be the intended key messages. Write a brief report (1-2 paragraphs) with your summary about the messages and the target audiences for each news release. Be prepared to come to talk about the key messages being conveyed during our next class session.</p> <p>AP Style - G, H, I, J, K</p>	
Week 4 9/19	<p>Key Messaging III</p> <p>After we've discussed what you learned from your key messaging research, we will spend some time on audience segmentation then tackle an actual news release.</p> <p>Overview of kits. How does a journalist use a kit? Which components are imperative and which are just nice to have? Information kits for other audiences (investors, employees, merchants, residents).</p> <p>Expect a quiz.</p>	<p>Decide what your favorite product or company is, then click on their website and scroll to the FAQ section. Be prepared to present your findings, especially commenting on the writing.</p> <p>AP Style L, M, N, O, P</p>	

<p>Week 5 9/26</p>	<p>Information Kits/FAQs While news releases are the primary means of communicating with the news media, we also prepare comprehensive Information Kits (sometimes called Media Kits). We'll look at some good and bad examples, then you'll craft a set of FAQs for a specific brand or issue.</p>	<p>Using the same organization that you chose for the FAQ assignment, scroll through and find at least two "profiles" of people. Be prepared to share your findings, especially commenting on the writing.</p> <p>Review the School of Journalism's Guide to Inclusive Writing and be prepared to discuss on October 7.</p>	
<p>Week 6 10/3</p>	<p>Information Kits/Bios/Profiles Customers, voters, donors all want to know about the people in an organization. That's why it's imperative to know how to craft a compelling profile from biographical info. We'll also spend a good deal of time on inclusive language.</p>	<p>Now, using the same organization one more time, see if you can locate any kind of media advisory or alert. If you have trouble finding one, I can help you find one.</p> <p>AP Style Q, R, S, T, U, V</p>	<p>Complete your profile and submit it no later than 9:00 p.m. on Friday</p>
<p>Week 7 10/10</p>	<p>NO CLASS – FALL RECESS</p>		
<p>Week 8 10/17</p>	<p>Media Alerts/Advisories These are becoming increasingly important in the world of PR. Agencies are using them to literally alert journalists and other key audiences about breaking news and events like grand openings, dedications, product launches.</p> <p>During this session, you will be given the take-home portion of the midterm exercise. Ask your questions before class ends because the instructor will not field any questions after the "take-home" section is made available online.</p>	<p>Review all of your notes to date. This midterm will be heavy on writing, not on memorizing facts.</p>	<p>Complete the take-home portion of the midterm and submit it by 7:00 p.m. on Monday before class. Late submissions will lose points.</p>
<p>Week 9 10/24</p>	<p>Midterm Exercise</p>	<p>Review a series of print and TV ads and be prepared to discuss the general tenets of good/great ads.</p> <p>AP Style W, X, Y, Z</p>	
<p>Week 10 10/31</p>	<p>Advertising Copywriting What is a creative brief and why is it important; review the 4C's of</p>	<p>Take an "ineffective" ad and develop a "brainstorm" page of words/terms.</p>	

	<p>research on audience composition and insights The fundamentals of advertising copywriting; the process.</p> <p>Guest speaker: Vance Kim, adjunct instructor, veteran ad copywriter</p> <p>In-class exercise: Vance will remain with us as you attempt your first advertising headline!</p>	<p>You'll use the "brainstorm" page to develop new ad copy during the next class session.</p>	
Week 11 11/7	<p>Advertising Copywriting II Making the Ineffective Effective You'll share your ineffective headline then tackle a new one. Then, we'll run it through ChatGPT, pass it to a classmate and receive a critique on each "stage" of improvement.</p>	<p>Review any magazine from any industry and collect at least two feature stories. Some suggestions: Vogue, Sports Illustrated, Bon Appetit, The Economist, Southern Living, Vanity Fair, Newsweek</p>	
Week 12 11/14	<p>Feature Writing It's what you've been waiting for: the chance to write a juicy story! You'll take everything you've learned, get some tips on feature writing, then craft your own. The subject matter will be agreed upon by the entire class.</p>	<p>Free reading: read anything you like from any source BUT you need to be prepared to discuss why it was good/bad/ugly!</p>	<p>Be prepared to pull up all of your writing samples to date. Select two that you would like to revise/improve during our next class session.</p>
Week 13 11/21	<p>Recap and . . .A Do-Over You will have the opportunity to revise/improve two previous assignments. We want these to be pristine for your job-hunting portfolio!</p>		<p>Work on Information Kit elements; I will hold extra office hours on Zoom if you need help</p>
Week 14 11/28	NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING		<p>Work on Information Kit elements; I will hold extra office hours on Zoom if you need help</p>
Week 15 12/5	<p>Presentation of final projects!</p>		
Final Exam Period 12/12, 7-9 p.m.	<p>Summative Experience</p>		

Policies and Procedures

Classroom Norms

Classroom norms describe the behaviors that are encouraged and discouraged during class. They can be a powerful tool for establishing a supportive learning environment. Refer to the CET resource, [a menu of discussion norms](#).

Course Evaluations

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. The process and intent of the end-of-semester evaluation should be provided. In addition, a [mid-semester evaluation](#) is recommended practice for early course correction.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

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 public relations or advertising class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

The USC Student Handbook (https://policy.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/USC_StudentCode_August2022.pdf)

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

https://catalogue.usc.edu/preview_entity.php?catoid=16&ent_oid=3459

"Since its founding, the 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."

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.

Generative AI Policy

The USC Annenberg Public Relations and Advertising program views generative AI as an addition to USC's digital literacy tools that students are encouraged to experiment with and use inside and outside the classroom. Students may use generative AI tools such as Chat GPT to help complete their class assignments but must disclose such use in the bibliography section. Students are solely responsible for the accuracy of their documents, regardless of whether they were completed with the aid of generative AI.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. **This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive.** More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the Financial Aid Office webpage for undergraduate- and graduate-level SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

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.

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

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

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 740-0411

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

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - \(323\) 442-2850 or \[otfp@med.usc.edu\]\(mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu\)](#)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

[Annenberg Student Success Fund](#)

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

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.

[Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund](#)

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

About Your Instructor

Dale Legaspi is a two-time Annenberg graduate who has more than a decade of experience in public relations and strategic communications for various B2B technology companies. He is currently a senior account supervisor at Zeno group, where he leads client teams spanning corporate practice and technology. His previous positions included working in-house at a telecommunications company and various positions at small and mid-sized agencies, where he represented clients in all areas of tech.

Specializing in delivering creative programs to raise the profiles of companies in all stages of maturity, he has launched a startup from stealth mode, prepared clients for multi-million dollar exit events and led communications programs for quarterly earnings and M&A activity. However, his writing roots run deep as his career began as a freelance sportswriter for the Los Angeles Times and Los Angeles Daily News. He graduated from USC Annenberg with a BA in public relations in 2005 before returning to complete his MA in 2016.

FINAL PROJECT DETAILS

You will prepare a detailed information package that contains common elements PR practitioners rely on. It also must include some advertising "crossover" materials that today's professional needs to be prepared to craft as the two disciplines intersect. By no later than the third class, each student will choose a topic specialty that will be the subject of several assignments and will be related to the final project. The topic should relate to a product or industry you're interested in as it will need to keep your attention all semester. "Nike" is too general; specialized shoelaces is too narrow a topic.

There are required and optional elements—all designed to help you hone your writing skills AND to craft a package that is worthy to share with a potential employer! Students will select the topic with instructor approval.

Final Project: Information Package, Due Thurs., December 5 at 7:00 p.m. No late submissions will be accepted.

You will prepare a detailed information kit (worth 135 pts.) on a company or organization of your choice. You are responsible for researching and writing all the material. All content must be original and writing must be your own.

The topic may reflect the type of public relations you think you might be interested in. For example, if you are interested in corporate social responsibility, Tom's Shoes or Ben & Jerry's might be interesting organizations for you to examine. However, your kit should not be a mirror reflection of materials and strategies already employed by an existing company. Unless you select or create a brand-new organization, you should not plan to prepare a corporate information kit. Rather, you should select some newsworthy aspect of that organization to highlight. It may be a fictional situation. For example, Starbucks' new philanthropy initiative (not real), or Lush Cosmetics' partnership with Time's Up (also not real).

Here are examples of past topics and their "news" –

- Sephora – new in-store recycling program
- Soho House – opening of a Palm Springs location
- Patagonia – promote its Worn Wear program
- Book publishing – promote new YA book by R.F. Kuang
- Oatly milk – Barista competition in Los Angeles
- University Tees – its first brick-and-mortar location
- Warby Parker – promote children's eye exams in Philadelphia
- Baby Bullet food processor – host children and parenting information and product fair
- Nike – promote partnership with NBA player Giannis Antetokounmpo and youth fitness

Required Elements – All kits must include:

1. **News release** key to the specific purpose or topic of your final project (30 points)
2. **Fact sheet** of some kind, either about the organization, about the specific purpose or a topic that enhances your subject. Must be two pages. (20 points)
3. **Advertisement Headline:** A headline for your organization's ad campaign that includes copy for two complementary pieces (e.g., billboard and busboard)*

*You **must** complete the 6-question Creative Brief that led to your eventual tagline as follows:

- What is the task?
- What is the goal?
- What do we need this?
- Who are we speaking to?
- What will make them listen to/read our material?
- Where will this story get told?

Additional Elements:

Your kit **must** include **two** additional elements (20 points each). Among your options:

1. **Set of THREE Media pitches.** One page in length total.
2. **Biography** with **photo** of a person associated with the subject/campaign. No more than two pages.
3. **Feature Story** of at least 500 words

Your presentation must include a PowerPoint, Keynote or Canva deck of FIVE slides that you will use to present to the class. The deck should provide contextual information to help your audience (your classmates) understand why you chose this topic, how it relates to the "bigger picture" of world news, and why it is newsworthy. You should plan to speak for 5 minutes. (20 points)

Slide 1 – client/organization logo and title

Slide 2 – news release screen shot

Slide 3 – fact sheet screen shot

Slide 4 – item of your choice

Slide 5 – problems/issues you may have encountered, what you learned in this process

