



MCOM 4673 Public Relations Writing

Spring 2021 | MWF 2:00-2:50PM | FA D202 & DB177

Instructor Contact Information:

Instructor: Dr. Eunji Cho

Office: Fain Fine Arts Center D205

Office hours: Mon, Wed, & Fri: 12:00PM-2:00PM, and by appointment

Email: eunji.cho@msutexas.edu | Phone: 940-397-4398

Course Description & Objectives

The course emphasizes the research and planning required for effective public relations writing, as well as professionalism in executing PR documents. Discussions and in-class exercises will focus on recognizing an organization's public relations opportunities and on how to communicate effectively with organizations' audiences.

Through discussions, class activities, and assignments, this course is designed to:

1. provide an understanding of the importance of planning and developing public relations messages.
2. help you make effective decisions in planning public relations messages.
3. provide the skills for writing effective audience-specific public relations messages.
4. integrate public relations theory with the skills you need to be an effective public relations writer.

Required Text & Materials

- Diggs-Brown. The PR Style Guide, Formats for Public Relations Practice. 3rd ed.
- Additional materials will be distributed during class, through email, or posted to D2L (Desire-to-Learn).

Course Requirements

- **Class activities:**
Over the course of the semester there will be various class activities. These activities will be done by groups of 2-3 or individually, and should be submitted by the end of the class. More specific guidelines (e.g., clients, grading criteria) will be provided in class.

- **Homework:**
There are individual homework assignments. Each student will be required to develop a specific PR practice. Specific guidelines and procedures for this assignment will be discussed later on in the semester.
- **Quizzes:**
Throughout the semester we will have weekly quizzes. Quiz questions are from lecture slides, the textbook, and discussion. There will not be make-up quizzes if you are late or miss the class, unless it is an excused absence and you inform me of your absence in advance.
- **Local Business Project (group project):**
At the end of semester, we will have a group project presentation. You will have a chance to show how you can apply your knowledge and understanding of the public relations process by 1) identifying the problem, 2) doing research, 3) coming up with solutions to solve the identified problem, and 4) presenting a comprehensive PR plan.

This project will be for local businesses, so there will be a potential for a real-life relationship with the businesses. In the final presentation, the business owners or marketing teams may be invited to see and grade your presentation.

The group project will be graded by the instructor and/or clients (50%), other members of the class who are part of other groups (25%), and your peers within your group (25%).

Information explaining this project will be provided in separate handouts well in advance of the beginning of the project and will include grading criteria, due date, and other requirements.

- **Participation**
This class includes various class activities. The activities are designed to be interesting and to help you learn. Thus, your active participation will affect how much you learn and how well you do in the course.

If emergencies arise or your circumstances change, please communicate with me. This will help us work together to try to find a solution for your situation.

In class, please:

- behave professionally
- arrive on time
- be prepared
- pay attention

- actively participate
- treat others with courtesy and respect
- use language thoughtfully

If you miss class, you miss the chance to participate in your education and the education of others in class. Your peers are counting on you to be in class and to participate.

Grading

- Class activities = 25%
- Quizzes = 25 %
- Homework = 10 %
- Local Business Project (group project) = 20 %
- Participation (attendance, discussion, presentation) = 20%
- Total = 100 %

Grading Criteria

The following scale will be used to determine the final grade:

- *A = 90-100%*
- *B = 80-89%*
- *C = 70-79%*
- *D = 60-69%*
- *F: Less than 60%*

Statements Related to the Current COVID-19 Situation

- Given the state of the world, everything in this course could change with very little notice. That means deadlines, projects, even weighted percentages for each component of the course, could change. Please note that I will consult with the class and use students' input to the extent practicable in making decisions about how to proceed. Students should not hesitate to contact me with questions, concerns and, even better, great suggestions. Most students know I will go out of my way to be fair to all.
- Safety and health of all are our top considerations. You are required to follow all best practices as they are developed during this crisis. If you feel sick, do not come to class. If you need to miss class, contact me as outlined under class procedures, and I will work with you.
- Masks will be required in all in-person classrooms, per the governor's order. Those who are unwilling to wear a mask must contact me before the end of the first week of class to discuss. Please see the university's official policy at the web sites listed below.
- A mandatory seating chart, to ensure social distancing and facilitate contact tracing should it be necessary, will be implemented.

- The Mass Comm. Dept. and the College of Fine Arts have adopted specific cleaning protocols, and all students are required to abide by these rules. Students who are unwilling to do their share to ensure everyone's health will be contacted by the professor. In short, you will be required to clean your area before and after class, the first as a safety precaution for yourself, the second as a courtesy toward others. We realize this means some areas may be cleaned twice within a brief time period, but this is better than not at all. This rule holds for traditional classrooms, labs, editing equipment, the newsroom, and public areas such as the work-café.
- All handouts and other information will be available through the university's D2L system, and D2L's Gradebook function will be enabled (I will, nonetheless, keep my own spreadsheet with grades, and students are welcome to contact me for grade updates). Students are expected to understand how to navigate D2L, even if we continue with in-person classes.
- If we are forced to switch to online-only instruction, deadlines, assignments and other course elements may change. I will provide clear revisions, in writing, and will address any questions/concerns by e-mail or in a video platform.
- Please note that the federal government, state government, various local government units (city, county, health district, etc.) and the university administration have the power to issue declarations that can directly affect how we navigate. Please be flexible, and we will get through these extraordinary times as a team.
- Students are encouraged to visit web sites developed by the university in response to this crisis:
 - <https://msutexas.edu/coronavirus/index.php>
 - <https://msutexas.edu/return-to-campus/msu-texas-commitment.php>
- I reserve the right to drop any student with an F if he/she violates any of these policies. At the same time, I will work with all students to my fullest ability to ensure a worthwhile educational experience.

Course Policies

1. Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism is: (1) using someone else's source material (published or unpublished, including content from the Internet) without following accepted citation guidelines; or (2) submitting work that is not your own. The instructor will take appropriate disciplinary action for students if a student is caught cheating, plagiarizing or fabricating information. The MSU Student Honor Creed in your student handbook and the university catalog reinforces this policy: "As an MSU student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else to do so." Please acknowledge that you have learned the meaning the term *academic dishonesty*. Students cannot use the excuse that they do not understand the concept of academic dishonesty.

2. **Disruptive Behavior:** Any student's classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or other students' ability to benefit from the instruction – or violates any other Standard of Conduct applicable to the classroom environment – will result in his/her removal from the class. (See MSU Student Handbook, "Standards of Student Conduct.>").
3. **Special Accommodations:** Any student with a disability who is registered with the MSU Office of Disability Support Services (940-397-4140, CSC Room 168) and needs specific accommodations, or requires other considerations because of a disability, should notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester to ensure that these accommodations are provided. Please note that all information provided to me remains confidential.
4. **Cell Phones and Other Recording Devices:** The use of cell phones and other recording or electronic devices is strictly prohibited during class. The instructor may permit, from time to time, the use of cell phones for legitimate class reasons. Recording the class is prohibited, unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA, or unless students have special permission from the instructor. Laptops may be used for the purpose of taking notes during class; however, their use must be limited to course-related activities.
5. **Limited Right:** The university requires faculty to provide this statement to all students: By enrolling in this course, the student expressly grants MSU a "limited right" in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The "limited right" shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student's work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and educational purposes.
6. **FERPA:** As a result of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, federal law bars the instructor from releasing information about students to parties outside the university – including parents/guardian - without the student's signed consent. Thus, in almost all cases the instructor will not discuss your academic progress or other matters with your parents. The instructor will only discuss grades with students. If there are any grade issues, the instructor will discuss grades during office hours.
7. **Campus Carry:** Senate Bill 11 passed by the 84th Texas Legislature allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective Aug. 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to the University's webpage at <https://mwsu.edu/campus-carry/rules-policies>. Please be advised that any violations of the law will be reported immediately.

8. Senior Portfolio: All mass communication majors are required to submit a portfolio as part of their internship course, which is a pre-requisite for Senior Production. This requirement is a part of MSU's reaccreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and is non-negotiable. Through the portfolio, students are required to demonstrate communication competence through the written word and visual communication; two examples of each competency are required. As you go through this and other classes, you are responsible for saving course work that could be included in your senior portfolio. Please see your instructor, adviser, the department chair or any Mass Communication faculty member for handouts with more information ("Mass Communication Senior Portfolio Competencies" and "Mass Communication Senior Portfolio FAQ"). These handouts are also available on the department web page: <https://msutexas.edu/academics/finearts/masscomm/>)

9. Social justice: Social justice is one of Midwestern State University's core values, and I consider the classroom to be a place where students will be treated with respect as human beings, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Moreover, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged. It is my expectation that ALL students be able to consider the classroom a safe environment.

Tentative Class Schedule

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to change and or move around scheduled lectures in order to facilitate for potential unplanned events (cancellations or guest speakers). You will be notified ahead of time of any changes to the schedule.

Week	Dates	Lecture / Discussion Topic
1	1/11	Course introduction / Ch1 Annual Reports
	1/13	
	1/15	
2	1/18	Ch2 Audio News Release
	1/20	
	1/22	
3	1/25	Ch3 Brochures
	1/27	
	1/29	
4	2/1	Ch5 Direct Mail Campaigns
	2/3	
	2/5	
5	2/8	Ch6 Media Kits
	2/10	
	2/12	
6	2/15	Ch7 Media Lists
	2/17	
	2/19	
7	2/22	Ch8 Media Tours
	2/24	
	2/26	
8	3/1	Ch9 New Media
	3/3	
	3/5	
9	3/8	Ch10 Newsletters
	3/10	
	3/12	
10	3/15	Ch11 News Release
	3/17	
	3/19	
11	3/22	CH12 Opinion-Editorials
	3/24	
	3/26	
12	3/29	CH13 Public Service Ads and Announcements
	3/31	
	4/2	Holiday Break
13	4/5	CH15 Video News Releases and Electronic Press Kits
	4/7	
	4/9	
14	4/12	CH16 Web Sites
	4/14	
	4/16	
15	4/19	Developing Business Project
	4/21	
	4/23	
16	4/26	Final Project Presentation
	4/28	

**Thanks to Professor Jim Sernoe, Professor Mitzi Lewis, and Professor Elizabeth Lewandowski for sharing their work, some of which is included here.*