



# PRL 2301: Public Relations Writing Online Course / Summer I - 2010

**Prerequisites:** Principles of Public Relations  
CAS 2301

## **Dr. DiMarco**

Mass Communication

Office: Bent Hall 434

Tel: 718-990-1688 (I will be checking messages daily if you need to speak with me)

Email: [dimarcoj@stjohns.edu](mailto:dimarcoj@stjohns.edu) (the best way to communicate with me during the course)

**Course links and file downloads at SJU Central: PRL 2301 (this is the HUB for the online course)**

## **Course Description**

In this course students will learn about the theory and practice of public relations writing. Coverage will include examination of the public relations and corporate communications writer (practitioner) and his or her role within organizations. Specific online threaded discussions will focus on the impact of public relations writing activities on publics with critical examination of persuasion, bias, spin, and motivation. Students will learn the practical skills of the field and study the range of writing roles and responsibilities of a public relations practitioner. Examinations of all types of print writing techniques are discussed.

3 Credit hours

## **Required Textbook and Materials**

**books are available at SJU bookstore or online at [www.drdimarco.com/class](http://www.drdimarco.com/class)**

- Public Relations Writing, Sixth Edition by Bivins. 7th ed
- AP Style Book
- Student workbook (Download from SJU central- Files section)
- Bivins Style Guide (Download from SJU central-Files section)
- Bivins Grammar Guide (Download from SJU central-Files section)

## **Learner Objectives**

Objectives:

After successfully completing the course, students will be able to:

- participate in online discussions and threaded emails.
- identify and define the purpose of public relations writing pieces.
- write and develop issue statements, pitch letters, press releases, facts sheets, and a media list
- edit and revise copy using the AP style for news writing
- create MS Word documents of writing pieces
- edit documents using track changes
- identify and define the importance of values and ethics in the practice of public relations

# Grading

## Writing Assignment Assessment (RUBRIC):

All writing assignments will be graded according to the following criteria (rubric). Each assignment will receive a rating from 1 to 4 (4= excellent, 3=acceptable, 2=acceptable with revisions, 1=unacceptable needs rewrite)

AP Style/Format (did you use it?)

Spelling (all correct?)

Punctuation (all correct?)

Clarity of content (lead, 5w's)

Persuasion/Motivation/Information angle (does the piece have a distinguishable angle?)

Workbook writing should follow the same style and guidelines.

**You must answer the questions thoughtfully.**

## Course Management and Expectations of Students:

**Special computer requirements:** St Johns Central access.

**Technical skills required of students:** St Johns Central access, Adobe Acrobat, Microsoft Word, Internet search and retrieval of documents

### How many times must you post to the MESSAGE BOARD?

The message board is for threaded discussions, not submitting assignments. There are TWO threaded discussion questions posted. To complete the posting requirement you should post ONE TOPIC and comment on at least one comment posted by a classmate. Your comment should be civil and well reasoned to provide evidence why you do or do not agree with their point of view. TWO POSTS TOTAL. Two paragraphs maximum per post.

**TIME:** Post comments and assignments by the due date listed. Check the message board and course site daily for messages, posts, and edited work.

### SUBMITTING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS and EXERCISES:

• **Students will submit writing assignments and exercise answers as WORD documents through the FILES section of SJU CENTRAL to their NAMED FOLDER. The folder "SUBMIT YOUR WORK HERE", has a folder with your name in it.**

• These assignments will be marked up and graded in WORD using TRACK CHANGES and sent back for revision and resubmission. For exercises, post only the pages requested. Copy and paste the pages into a separate document for each assignment.

• Assignments will be returned within 1 week and can be revised and resubmitted the following week for a final grade.

**\*\*\*\*ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS SHOULD BE POSTED TO YOUR NAMED FOLDER IN THE FILES SECTION OF SJU CENTRAL. (Word Docs - .doc) DO NOT USE .DOCX!**

Participation / Online Posts	10 points
Chapter 3, 4, 5	40 points
Chapter 6 & 11	50 points
Chapter 6 extra credit	5 points
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	105 points

# Online Post Assignments

Late Posts Lose 50%.

## Post Assignment #1 - Part One

**5 Points**

READ CHAPTERS 1, 2, 3 FIRST! A Pressroom is an online repository for a company's written materials including: press releases, backgrounders, fact sheets, media kits, and product announcements. Go to a company website of your choosing and look at the navigation at the bottom of the home page to find the pressroom. Find and summarize **two controlled messages** from a company website PRESSROOM. The messages should attempt to show that the organization is "going green" (environmentally conscious). Provide links to the online sources (www.?????.com/?????).

List the organization (example: the United Way, IBM, Nike -for profit or non profit), then answer...

1. What is the branded global message (tagline) of this organization?
2. Who is the primary target audience for the controlled messages in the pressroom?
3. What is the goal of each message?

## Post Assignment #1 - Part Two

**5 Points**

COMMENT on one other person's post by answering this question about each controlled message:

1. Do you feel the controlled information messages they disseminate are successful in persuading the target audience? -WHY OR WHY NOT?

Comments should be one paragraph maximum. Be clear and concise. Everything counts.

POST #1 IS DUE ON THE COURSE MESSAGE BOARD BY **JUNE 4.**

COMMENT/REPLY to a CLASSMATE BY **JUNE 7.**

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# Weekly Exercises and Writing Assignments

**Complete ALL EXERCISES LISTED BELOW. Exercises will be graded and returned for edits.**

Copy and paste the question from the workbook directly into your Word document. Place your answer directly below each question. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation all count. Use AP Style at all times. (Refer to the Style book and Online Style manual at SJU Central)

**\*\*\*CRITICAL ASSIGNMENTS ARE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL BE EDITED BY ME AND RETURNED FOR RESUBMISSION. Critical Assignments that are late WILL NOT BE EDITED AND RETURNED.**

## Week 1 - JUNE 1-3

**READ CHAPTER 3** and complete the following exercises

- 3-1 Developing an Issue Statement
  - 3-2 Preparing a Direction Sheet
  - ~~3-3 Conducting an Interview for Topic Information~~
  - ~~3-4 Conducting Secondary Research on Your Target Audience~~
  - 3-5 Developing a Questionnaire for Target Audience Research
  - 3-6 Setting Objectives
- Also-complete the Post assignment

**Due by June 5 NOON**

**10 points**

## Week 2 - JUNE 7 - JUNE 10

**READ CHAPTER 4** and complete the following exercises

- 4-1 Setting Message Strategy
- ~~4-2 Understanding Cognitive Dissonance~~
- ~~4-3 Persuading~~
- 4-4 Elaboration Likelihood Model
- 4-5 Choosing the Right Medium

**Due by June 12 noon**

**15 points**

## Week 3 - JUNE 14 - JUNE 17

**READ CHAPTER 5** and complete the following exercises

Media Relations and Placement 15

- 5-1 Judging Newsworthiness
- 5-2 Making Contact with the Media
- 5-3 Compiling Media Lists

**Due by June 19 noon**

**15 points**

## Week 4 & 5 - JUNE 21 - JUNE 24 (FINAL ASSIGNMENT)

**READ CHAPTER 6 and 11** and complete the following exercises

News Releases and Backgrounders + social media

- 6-1 Outlining a Press Release 5
- 6-2 Writing Leads 5
- 6-3 Writing Leads with a Local Angle 10
- 6-4 Writing a News Release 10
- ~~6-5 Writing a Broadcast News Release~~
- 6-6 Writing a Pitch Letter and Media Advisory (extra credit) (+5)
- 6-7 Writing a Fact Sheet 10

- ~~11-1 Outlining a Blog Site~~
- ~~11-2 Writing for a Blog Site~~
- ~~11-3 Developing a Blog Site~~

**News Release Drafts Due by June 26 noon**  
**Final Copy Due by July 1 midnight**  
Course ends on July 6

**50 points**

**Online Resources:**

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)  
[www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org)  
[www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com)

To view Benton's Headlines feed in your RSS Aggregator, paste  
<http://www.benton.org/index.php?q=taxonomy/term/6/all/feed> into your reader.  
For upcoming media policy events, see <http://www.benton.org>

USC Annenberg Strategic Public Relations Center Public Relations – Generally Accepted Practices Study (GAP IV)

Includes information on such topics as budgets for public relations departments within corporations, as well as staffing levels, reporting lines, and the use of outside public relations firms. News Release:  
[http://www.usc.edu/uscnews/news\\_releases/detail.php?id=118](http://www.usc.edu/uscnews/news_releases/detail.php?id=118)  
Full Report: <http://ascweb.usc.edu/asc.php?pageID=493>

UGA/Cox Center – Annual Survey of Journalism and Mass Communication Graduates (2005)  
Notes changes in the job market for and median salaries of public relations graduates. Also tracks the percentage of students studying public relations.

Survey Information: <http://www.grady.uga.edu/annualsurveys/>  
Full Report: <http://www.grady.uga.edu/annualsurveys/grd05/GraduateReport.pdf>

Thomas L. Harris/Impulse Research – Public Relations Client Survey (2004)  
<http://www.impulseresearch.com/harris/harris2004.pdf>

Newspaper Association of America – NADbase: Newspaper Audience Database (Spring 2006)  
Includes ranking of top 100 newspapers by readership and breakdowns of readership data by gender, age, and household income.  
[http://www.naa.org/nadbase/2006\\_NADbase\\_Report.pdf](http://www.naa.org/nadbase/2006_NADbase_Report.pdf)

Advertising Age – Fact Pack 2006

Includes rankings of magazines and newspapers by circulation and gross revenue, rankings of advertisers and brands by category, and rankings of agencies (including multicultural agencies) by revenue.  
<http://www.adage.com/images/random/FactPack06.pdf>