Instructor: Dr. Brunner  
Office: 306 Haley Center Basement  
Office Phone: 844-2755  
email: brunnbr@auburn.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 3:15 to 4:30 pm.  
Wednesday 1 to 4:30 p.m.  
Other times by appointment  
Associated Press Stylebook  
Dictionary and Thesaurus  
Prerequisites: JRNL 1100, PRCM 3040, COMM 3500, COMM 3600, RTVF 3300, 2.3 GPA  

Course Description:  
This course is an intensive writing class designed to prepare public relations students to communicate messages to key audiences. The effectiveness of public relations activities is based on the organization’s ability to identify, assess, design and deliver information that will influence the behavior of targeted groups. Writing is the foundation of all public relations activities and is clearly of great importance. Therefore, practitioners must have the ability to clearly and concisely express ideas to internal and external audiences without any errors that detract from the message.  

Course Goals:  
Upon completion of this course, students should be able to perform the following tasks:  

- identify target audiences  
- plan, write, edit and transmit public relations communications vehicles.  

Course Objectives:  
In an effort to meet overall goals, this course is designed to meet the following specific objectives:  

- analyze how organizations communicate with publics  
- examine the effectiveness of public relations techniques  
- familiarize students with professional standards  
- develop high quality writing skills  
- teach students to write on deadline and in stressful situations  
- understand how persuasive writing differs from news writing  
- help students develop confidence in their writing ability
- enhance students’ judgment and critical thinking skills
- develop a professional portfolio.

**Course Policies:**

All readings should be completed before class discussion and lecture. You will need to keep up with readings in order to understand the concepts and theories that I go over in class. Stay on top of your readings so that they are not problematic.

You may withdraw from this class (with a “W” on your transcript) until mid-semester.

I will check and respond to e-mail during my office hours and other times that are convenient for me.

All students are expected to attend scheduled classes and keep any appointments with the instructor and their work teams. In addition, all students are expected to follow the university’s guidelines concerning academic honesty.

Your textbook provides background information, however, **DO NOT** follow the style and format shown in its examples. Some of the examples do not use AP correctly and the formats used are sometimes different than what I teach in class. **ALWAYS use the formats I have taught you in class and follow AP rules.**

Group work means group work. Obviously, you will make assignments within your group, but your direction and ideas must be a group effort. When assignments are given, students should work together to determine the direction of their efforts, evaluate the quality of their efforts and make suggestions for improvement. This is not a project you can just parcel out for individual work during the semester and then join together at the end.

In practice, the “dead” in deadline means if something is not done on time, it is useless. Computer- and printer-related excuses are not acceptable. Nor are excuses due to binding or other assembly issues. If you fail to do an assignment on time, you will be penalized. From 1 minute to 24 hours of the due date (outside assignments are due at the beginning of class), the penalty will be 25%; 48 hours late the penalty is 50%. **No assignments will be accepted two days after the original due date.** You know when assignments are due well in advance. Plan accordingly. If you fail to do an assignment on time (whether it be written or a presentation), your score is zero.

All assignments must be neatly typed. Points will be deducted for spelling, grammar and technical errors. Proofread your work. **You will not receive an A for any assignment that has more than one spelling, grammar, editing or technical error per page.**

For your protection and my peace of mind, keep copies of all your completed assignments.

See me immediately if you have any difficulties with this course. Do not wait until the end of the semester to contact me with problems. I’m always happy to help you in any
way I can, but any delay in communicating with me reduces your chances of getting that help. Failure to return anything you borrow from me by the final meeting will result in your receiving an incomplete in the course. I will not change the grade until you return the missing material.

Expectations:

This is a professional course and students are expected to behave as professionals at all times. To that end the following activities are required:

- **attendance** – you are expected to be in class for each session. However, I will not take daily attendance. **You will need to bring a medical or other appropriate excuse before being allowed to make up any missed assignment.** This means if you miss an assignment and do not have an appropriate excuse you cannot make up the missed work. Any make up material must be completed within a week of your return to class or it will become a zero.

- **writing assignments** – there will be in-class and take home writing assignments for this course. These are designed to test your skill levels and your ability to apply theoretical concepts to practice. **All in-class assignments are due at the end of the class period.** Items not turned in at the end of class are subject to late penalties. For items turned in within 24 hours of the due date, the penalty will be 25%; 48 hours late the penalty is 50%; 72 hours late, the penalty is 75%. **No assignments will be accepted three days after the original due date;**

- **mid-term exam** – there will be a mid-term exam, worth 100 points. The exam will cover lecture material as well as reading assignments, class discussion materials, films, etc. **You will need to bring a medical or other appropriate excuse before being allowed to make up the mid-term exam.** Any mid-term exam not made up within a week will become a zero;

- **group project** – students will be divided into groups to work on and present an assigned task of creating an organization. A part of the project will be a peer evaluation. Any group member who is not present for the presentation will receive a zero for that portion of the project;

- **press kits** – the final project in this class will be a press/media kit. Details will be given later in the semester;

- **press conference and crisis plan** – students will be divided into groups, will write a crisis communication plan and will hold a press conference to address a crisis situation.

- **final exam** – you must attend the final. If you cannot, you must have an excuse from your academic dean.

Assignment Descriptions:
• **Writing assignments** – there will be 8 writing assignments worth 20 points each. You will receive specific and complete instructions for each assignment. All assignments are to be turned in clean and without errors. You will receive a numerical score for each assignment determined by quality of writing, content and technical proficiency. Technical errors are costly. Each grammatical error, spelling error, typo, improper format, punctuation error and fact error will cost **two** points. Style guidelines are determined by the AP Stylebook. The instructor reserves the right to determine quality of writing.

• **Mid-term exam** – there will be one mid-term exam worth 100 points. It will cover lecture material, discussions, readings and exercises.

• **Press conferences** – during the semester you will be divided into small groups. Each group will be assigned a client and provided a client profile. Later in the semester, you will face a crisis situation. Your group will prepare a press conference for the next class. Other class members will act as the press and ask questions. The groups will be given a grade for performance, writing and ability to answer questions and preparation. Again this assignment will be graded on grammar, spelling, punctuation, editing, style and format. Each error will cost **four** points.

• **Group project** – teams will create an organization and determine the importance and responsibilities of public relations within it. Again this assignment will be graded on grammar, spelling, punctuation, editing, style and format. Each error will cost **four** points.

• **Feature** – this project requires you to interview primary and secondary sources such as alumni, current students, former faculty, current faculty, etc. in order to write a 3- to 4-page article. Your article will be considered for publication in the department’s alumni newsletter in the spring. You may be given background information in the form of e-mails to help with this project. Remember that this is background information and not information you are to pass off as having written yourself. Doing so would be considered plagiarism. Again this assignment will be graded on grammar, spelling, punctuation, editing, style and format. Each error will cost **four** points.

• **Final project/Press Kit** – the final project will give students an opportunity to apply the work done throughout the semester into one comprehensive package. Again this assignment will be graded on grammar, spelling, punctuation, editing, style and format. Each error will cost **four** points.

• **Final exam** – there will be a final exam worth 100 points. It will be comprehensive and will cover lecture material, discussions, readings and exercises. **You MUST attend the final exam. If you cannot, you need a note from your academic dean to reschedule it.**

**Cost of Errors:**

All errors for in-class assignments will be assessed a deduction of two points each. This includes AP Style, grammar, spelling, editing, format, fact, content and typographical errors.
All errors in your group project, feature project, press conference materials, crisis plan and press kit will be assessed a deduction of four points each. These errors will be more costly because you have the luxury of more time to work on these assignments.

Remember at all times you are to turn in professional work. That means it should be free of errors. You wouldn’t want to lose an account or your job because of such mistakes. Think of me as your boss.

Grade Determination:
Following is a breakdown of how your grade will be determined:

| Written assignments | 8 @20 points = 160 points |
| Press Kit           | 180 points |
| Press Conference & Crisis Plan | 100 points |
| Feature Project     | 40 points (5 points come from submitting revised feature) |
| Exam                | 100 points |
| Group Project       | 20 points |
| Final Exam          | 100 points |
| TOTAL               | 700 POINTS |

Course Grading:
The grade you receive in this course will be based on the total points you earn on all assignments, quizzes, exams, and projects.

To earn an A you must have 630 or more points
To earn a B you must have 560-629 points
To earn a C you must have 559-490 points
To earn a D you must have 489-420 points
You will earn an F for 419 points and below.

Timeliness:
Keeping deadlines is critical to your success in the class. Late assignments will be penalized unless you present a medical or other appropriate excuse. From 1 minute to 24 hours of the due date (outside assignments are due at the beginning of class), the penalty will be 25%; 48 hours late the penalty is 50%; 72 hours late, the penalty is 75%. No assignments will be accepted three days after the original due date.

Academic Honesty:
You are expected to turn in original work. This means you cannot turn in anything that you wrote for another class, at an internship, as a volunteer or in any other academic or professional setting. This also means you cannot turn in anyone else’s work whether it is from the web, corporate literature, e-mails, information I provide you as background information or any other source. You may use information that I provide or that you research for background materials, but you cannot present this writing as if it were your own. This is an offense that WILL be
reported to the Academic Honesty Committee. It is the student’s responsibility to understand how Auburn University defines academic honesty. This definition can be found in the Tiger Cub.

**Accommodations for Students with Disability:**
Students needing accommodations should arrange a meeting the first week of class. Come during office hours or email for an alternate time. Bring the Accommodation Memo and Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. Discuss items needed in this class. If you do not have an Accommodation Memo but need special accommodations, make an appointment with The Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT) or email: scw0005@auburn.edu

**Diversity:**
The Department of Communication and Journalism recognizes the importance of both reflecting and teaching diversity. Our policy is intended to be inclusive of all underrepresented and minority groups whatever their race, religion, national origin, gender, age, ability or sexual orientation.

**Feature Story:**
The purpose of this project is to give you an opportunity to have a published piece to add to your portfolio. Therefore it will have live up to professional standards. You will be assigned a topic in class. You **MUST** conduct interviews of primary and secondary sources. These sources might include alumni, current students, former faculty, current faculty, etc. I may provide you with background materials in the form of e-mails from contacts. Remember this information is background information. You may not turn in this writing or anything you found on the web or in any other printed or published source and present it as your own work. Five points of this assignment revolve around the submission of your revised feature.

**Final Project:**
The purpose of this project is to give you an opportunity to develop items of portfolio-quality that can be used in your future employment search. Therefore it will be graded on content, typos, grammar, editing, spelling, AP style an format. This assignment will take a considerable amount of time and should not be postponed until the last minute. In my opinion, it is **IMPOSSIBLE** to complete this project in a one-week time frame.

Your assignment is to prepare and submit a complete press kit. **You will prepare all materials for the press kit – again this means that you are writing each piece on your own and specifically for this class. You may use materials for background information but you may NOT turn in those items as your own work whether these items are from the web, corporate literature, me, e-mails or any other source. You cannot turn in anything you wrote for another class, an internship, a volunteer opportunity or any other academic or professional setting.**

All press kits must include the following:
1.) table of contents
2.) fact sheet
3.) biography or feature
4.) two press releases
   a.) one for the local press
   b.) one for the national press
5.) 30-second and 60-second broadcast releases
6.) minimum of three photo captions with mock photos attached
7.) position paper
8.) pitch letter directed to employees, community leaders, media and/or a target public.

Your project will be graded on research, accuracy, thoroughness, format, neatness, spelling, grammar, punctuation, AP Style, typos, format, and presentation. Each error will cost four points. YOUR NATIONAL AND LOCAL PRESS RELEASES MUST BE DIFFERENT. IF THEY ARE NOT, YOU WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO FOR ONE. If you do not reprint pages, but rather write in corrections and if you do not follow the formats taught in class, you will lose points. You will also lose points for editing mistakes, grammar mistakes, spelling mistakes, AP mistakes, and typos. I don’t want to hear that you’re bad at editing, AP, spelling, grammar, etc. Take the time necessary to proofread. Your project is due at the beginning of your last class. I do not want to hear excuses like my printer jammed, Copy Cat didn’t finish on time, my roommate and I had an argument, I had a falling out with my group from another class, etc. If it’s not in my hand at the beginning of class, you will be penalized points as noted in the syllabus. You know from the first day of class when this project is due and what I expect. It’s not a surprise. Complete things appropriately or face the consequences.

PRELIMINARY COURSE SCHEDULE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READING due for THIS class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
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<td>Press release format</td>
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<td>Week 1</td>
<td>In-class Assignment #1</td>
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<td>“Me 20 Years in the Future”</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Review of AP Style</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Assign Group Project</td>
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<td>Review Assignment #1</td>
<td>Chapter 10 pgs. 129-141</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Workday for Group Project</td>
<td>Chapter 6 pgs. 63-96</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Presentation of Group Projects</td>
<td>Chapter 6 pgs. 70-71</td>
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<td>Sept. 8</td>
<td>15th Day of Class</td>
<td>Appendix A pgs. 210-211</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>News Releases</td>
<td>Chapter 10 pgs. 129-141</td>
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<td>In-class Assignment #2</td>
<td>“Grand Opening of New Student Union”</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Feature Writing</td>
<td>Chapter 6 pgs. 63-96</td>
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<td>Assign Feature</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Planning your Message</td>
<td>Chapter 6 pgs. 70-71</td>
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<td>Mission Statements</td>
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Backgrounders & Fact Sheets
In-Class Assignment #3
“Fact Sheet”

Week 5  Diversity in Public Relations  TBA
Week 6  In-Class Assignment #4
“Snapple”

Week 6  Media Relations and Placement  Chapter 7 pgs. 97-104
Media Scavenger Hunt
Week 7  Pitching  Appendix A pgs. 213-214
In-Class Assignment #5
“Pitch Letter”

Week 7  Mid-term Exam
Week 8  Opinions and Editorials  Chapter 11 pgs. 142-147
In-Class Assignment #7
“Position Paper”

Oct. 8  MID-TERM of the SEMESTER
Week 8  Workday for Feature
Week 9  Workday for Feature
Week 9  Bad News  Chapter 10 pg. 130
In-Class Assignment #6  Chapter 13 pgs. 163-171
“Bad News”

Week 10  Brochures & Flyers  Chapter 3 pgs. 22-29
Newsletters  Chapter 9 pgs. 111-128
Final Project Proposal Due
Week 10  Workday for Feature Story
Week 11  Crisis Communication
Week 11  Press Conference Workday
Week 12  Press Conference Workday
Week 12  Press Conferences Presentation Day
Week 13  Broadcast  Chapter 2 pgs. 11-19
In-Class Assignment #8
“Broadcast Releases”

Week 14  Features Due
Week 14  Interviewing for Jobs
Week 14  Annual Reports
Nov. 25  Thanksgiving Break
Nov. 27  Thanksgiving Break
Week 15  Press Kits due by beginning of class (2 p.m.). You will receive a late penalty if I do not have them at this time.
Week 15  Review Day

FINAL EXAM  December 11 12 to 2:30 p.m.

****You must attend the final. If you cannot, you must have an excuse from your academic dean.