

**Public Relations and Corporate Communications**  
**School of Continuing Studies**  
**Georgetown University**  
**Washington, D.C. 20057**

## **MPPR 700: Public Relations Writing** **Syllabus**

INSTRUCTOR: Michael Long  
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OFFICE HOURS: by appointment

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Students are required to bring to class a laptop equipped with Microsoft Word or compatible program.

**Course Description:** The goal of this course is for students to learn to write essential public relations documents such as press releases, op-eds, speeches, fact sheets, and talking points. Some classes will be lectures. Others will be writing in a workshop environment with review by the instructor and other students. Students who complete this course will have had intensive support in learning to write public relations documents at a professional level.

**Learning Goals:** At the end of this class,

- Students will be knowledgeable about the elements of public relations writing;
- Students will be able to recognize and deliver strong writing in a variety of PR vehicles;
- Students will have strengthened their editing skills; and
- Students will have a strong sense of how to write and edit well under time constraints.

Because writing is best learned by doing, students will write and edit in almost every class.

**Attendance:** Your physical presence is required in the classroom. The instructor considers attendance indispensable to this material. You will receive a grade for your attendance that will be factored into your final grade. The grade will be determined by this simple rule: If you attend every class, you will receive an A. If you miss one class, you will receive an A-; two classes, B+; three classes, B; etc.

Please notify the instructor by email as soon as you know you will be late or absent. This will not change your attendance grade but it demonstrates common courtesy.

- The student is responsible for securing notes, announcements and assignments from classmates. The instructor will not provide this information outside of class.

**Submitted Work:** Your assignments should meet Georgetown University's high standard of excellence. Homework should include student name, class name and meeting time near the top of the first page; should employ a reasonable point-size and font (e.g., Times New Roman, Palatino, or Georgia), and reasonable margins.

Formatting will vary with each assignment, so be sure to write down specifications in class.

Bring two (2) hard copies of your assignment to class the day it is due, one for review in class and the other to turn in. Use staples, not paperclips or folded corners.

Late submissions will be considered for acceptance on a case-by-case basis.

**Preparation and Readiness:** This class is for students who have already mastered general writing and grammar. Grades will reflect not only the completion of the assignment but also spelling and use of proper English. Submit each assignment as if it will be published as-is with your name attached.

**Civility:** The use of cellphones, PDAs, and other devices is prohibited in the classroom.

**Guest Speakers:** Throughout the semester, we may have guest speakers.

**Ethics Statement:** As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor Pledge, and as good scholars and citizens, you are expected to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of this course. You are expected to be familiar with the letter and spirit of the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System and on the Honor Council website. The instructor is similarly obligated to uphold the Honor System and report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty.

**Academic Resource Center:** If you believe you have a disability, please contact the Academic Resource Center ([arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

**Textbooks:** This class does not require a textbook. For students seeking reference material, the instructor recommends these books:

Bivins, Thomas H., *Public Relations Writing*. Any recent edition.  
Strunk & White, *Elements of Style*. Any edition.

**Required Reading:** Come to class conversant in current events through daily review of major newspapers such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*.

**Participation:** Whether in discussion, working in small groups or pairs, editing a classmate's work, or doing an in-class writing exercise, every student must significantly participate.

**Crisis Exercises:** The instructor will occasionally conduct crisis writing exercises. During these, the class will be briefed on a hypothetical situation and then instructed to write a PR document

related to it. Make-up exercises for absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but students absent for an exercise may receive an F for the exercise.

**Final Project:** Each student will turn in a packet of all work for the semester. This will be in the form of a presentation folder for showing work to a potential employer.

**Grading Summary:** The instructor will award students an A, B, C, D, or F for each assignment.

The instructor uses letter grades instead of points because assigning points for writing can be arbitrary. (For example, there may be no significant difference between a paper marked 82 out of 100 and one marked 84 out of 100.)

All assignments have equal weighted value toward your final grade. (For example, the A you receive for writing a short press release will have the same impact on your final grade as the A you receive for writing a long speech.)

**Scale for Final Grade:**

- A: A on most assignments
- B: B on most assignments
- C: C on most assignments
- D: D on most assignments
- F: 2 or more Fs

**Note on Homework and Instructor Assistance:** To improve your writing, you must write frequently, seek feedback, and revise accordingly. Therefore the instructor will work with you by email as you complete the homework because. You will not learn very much if you fail to exploit this opportunity. Speak to students who have taken this class under this instructor to better understand the importance of this opportunity.

## COURSE SUMMARY

<b>Class</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>1</b>	Introductions Expectations, Procedures and Course Overview Press Releases
<b>2</b>	Press Releases
<b>3</b>	Press Releases Fact Sheets, Backgrounders, Q&A and Talking Points
<b>4</b>	Fact Sheets, Backgrounders, Q&A and Talking Points
<b>5</b>	Op-eds
<b>6</b>	Op-eds
<b>7</b>	Op-eds
<b>8</b>	Op-eds
<b>9</b>	Speechwriting
<b>10</b>	Speechwriting
<b>11</b>	Speechwriting
<b>12</b>	Speechwriting
<b>13</b>	Feature Articles / Correspondence / Pitches
<b>14</b>	FINAL CLASS