ADPR 221: Strategic Writing for Advertising and Public Relations—A Peer Review of Teaching Benchmark Portfolio

Michael D. Hanus
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, mhanus2@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/prtunl
Part of the Higher Education Commons, Higher Education and Teaching Commons, and the Public Relations and Advertising Commons

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/prtunl/83

This Portfolio is brought to you for free and open access by the Peer Review of Teaching Project at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
It has been accepted for inclusion in UNL Faculty Course Portfolios by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
ADPR 221: Strategic Writing for Advertising and Public Relations—
A Peer Review of Teaching Benchmark Portfolio

Michael D. Hanus
College of Journalism & Mass Communications
Advertising & Public Relations Sequence
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
ADPR 221: Strategic Writing for Advertising and Public Relations
mhanus2@unl.edu
Abstract

The objective for this course portfolio was to document the changes implemented to a core advertising and public relations writing course. The portfolio outlines five proposed goals for the revised course: students should be able to write for an audience, give and receive quality feedback, prepare for novel situations in the workplace, see writing as rewarding, creative, and fun, and learn professional conventions and industry standards for strategic writing. The course was significantly restructured in order to better reach these goals on student assignments, activities, and during lectures. Each goal was assessed with a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Although the results indicate a need for a better assessment strategy, the overall process was helpful in determining how to better structure the course with student goals in mind and will strongly influence further development for future sections.

Keywords: advertising and public relations, writing, peer review, professional development, ACE
# Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................................2  
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................... 3  
Objectives of Peer Review Course Portfolio .................................................................................. 4  
Course Description ............................................................................................................................. 4  
Course Goals ......................................................................................................................................6  
Teaching Methods ............................................................................................................................... 8  
Illustrated Changes to Meet Course Goals & Rationale ................................................................. 9  
Analysis of Student Learning ............................................................................................................11  
Planned Changes .............................................................................................................................. 15  
Summary & Overall Assessment of Portfolio Process .................................................................... 18  
Appendix 1: Fall 2016 Course Syllabus .............................................................................................. 19  
Appendix 2: Spring 2017 Syllabus ..................................................................................................... 25  
Appendix 3: Course Rubric .................................................................................................................32  
Appendix 4: Peer Review Guidelines .................................................................................................33  
Appendix 5: Sample Class Preparation Assignments .................................................................... 37  
Appendix 6: Crisis Communication In-Class Activity .................................................................... 38  
Appendix 7: Fall Peer Review Outline ............................................................................................... 42  
Appendix 8: End of Semester Reflection Prompt ............................................................................ 43  
Appendix 9: Mid-Semester Survey Questions .................................................................................. 44
Objectives of Peer Review Course Portfolio

My objectives for this course portfolio are to describe the justifications I have for identifying my five course goals, describe the changes I have made from last semester’s course to the current version, and assess the outcomes of those five course goals. The Peer Review of Teaching program was influential in changing my ability to conceptualize a course that was in need of improvement, and I hope to illustrate the ways in which the program impacted my course.

Course Description

The course is Strategic Writing for Advertising & Public Relations. This 200-level course is designed to introduce students to the basic concepts of 1) demonstrating awareness of multimedia writing styles, techniques and tactics used in the ADPR professions 2) understand researching, writing and editing for strategic writing and 3) understand goal-oriented writing designed for diverse audiences. As an introductory course, students typically spend the first few weeks learning journalistic writing and AP style, moving toward public relations writing, and then conclude with creative writing for print, radio, television and digital media advertisements.

Context

This course is a foundational course for the department. It is a requirement for all AD/PR majors. The course is an ACE 1 course that specifies the following outcomes:

- Students will write texts, in various forms, with an identified purpose, that respond to specific audience needs, incorporate research or existing knowledge, and use applicable documentation and appropriate conventions of format and structure.

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications also holds accreditation from the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). As a result, the course should address the following competencies:

- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness

This course is the first dedicated writing course in the AD/PR curriculum. There are other courses with an emphasis on creative content development, but those are structured around the principles of persuasion rather than an explicit writing class. This class is typically students’ first exposure to different forms of strategic writing that they may encounter in more detail in more advanced classes. The course is offered for 3 hours one day a week.

Enrollment

Ideally, the students are primarily composed of sophomores, most of who have finished some general requirements, took some basic introduction courses in communication or journalism, and have begun to start focusing on their sequence in advertising and public relations. Most of the
students are within the college and within the department, but about 10% come from outside disciplines. Very few have been exposed to professional standards of goal-oriented writing. Most students are planning on finding jobs when they graduate, primarily within a communication/public relations/advertising/marketing field. However, due to scheduling and the sequence having a large amount of transfer majors, the actual enrollment tends to skew differently.

As a skills class, the maximum enrollment is 20 students. I teach two sections of the course. Currently, the breakdown of student grade level is 2 freshmen (14%), 6 sophomores (43%), 4 juniors (28%), and 2 seniors (14%) in Section 1, with 0 freshmen, 7 sophomores (37%), 7 juniors (37%), and 5 seniors (26%) in Section 2.

**How the Course Fits into the Broader Curriculum**

Within the broader curriculum, ADPR 221 is designed to be taken in the second semester of the major along with Strategy Development. Together these two courses complement one another—development focuses on research skills and insight development, and writing focuses on communicating findings in direct and creative ways. Both courses are launching pads into more specific advertising or public relations courses; students can take electives like Brands and Branding, Writing for Digital Media, Interactive Media Design, and Copy & Concept after these initial courses.

This course is an AD/PR major’s first exposure to a writing intensive course within the major. It is designed to establish a strong platform for writing skills that can continue throughout the major. It is also designed to expose students to a number of different kinds of writing within the major. Here, students are given exposure to advertisement writing and public relations writing, creative writing and direct writing, and professional and personal writing.

**Course Selection**

I chose this course because it was a real struggle for me the first time I taught it. I think with the number of different types of writing and the class schedule it is difficult to find a balance between giving students information they need to know and giving them activities and time to promote creative thinking and problem solving skills. Lectures fell flat because they were focused on strict technical aspects of writing without enough examples, and during writing activities (some of which the students enjoyed) I felt like I was not doing enough as an instructor; letting students work quietly while I waited for questions. This course is a challenge for me because I have had a hard time balancing basic student writing skills (e.g., teaching grammar, style guidelines, organization) and professional industry skills. My impression was that the students did not see much value in the course and looked at it as low-priority, easy, busy-work.

In addition, the course schedule (3 hours on one day of the week) has been particularly difficult to work with. Once-a-week meetings with long hours make it difficult to juggle giving students instruction, activities, and assigning an amount of homework that would be more manageable broken into smaller chunks. Furthermore, although the course is ideal for sophomores entering the major, I have a significant number of junior and senior students that have had a number of
more specific advertising or public relations courses. In this sense it can be difficult emphasizing the important beginning writing skills and techniques for early students while pushing more advanced students toward very detailed and impactful professional writing.

**Course Goals**

Based on the ACE 1 guidelines, the ACEJMC competencies, discussions with other instructors and the course designer, I have developed a number of course goals that I plan to implement and teach for the revised course this semester.

1) *Students should be capable of writing persuasively for a specific audience.*

Students need to understand how to first identify that audience based on their own or the clients’ criteria. They should understand how to do basic research into that audience in order to find out how that audience thinks and what approaches would be most beneficial when writing to that audience. Importantly, students should learn that they need to keep audience in mind with every paragraph, sentence, and individual word in their writing.

**Last Semester**

Last semester, my course was structured to keep audience in mind, but there were not consistent measures or considerations for audience across each assignment or class session. Students were required to write an outline before each writing assignment that mentions how they will appeal to the target audience, but most of these statements address superficial issues and do not demonstrate strong research or audience understanding.

**Goals for This Semester**

I make audience one of the most important elements to address in my written feedback to students, but I believe I that the class would benefit more from incorporating audience more fully throughout the course (e.g., within in-class examples, within rubrics for assignments, within student peer review).

2) *Students should gain the ability to give and receive quality feedback.*

In any professional strategic writing position, the writer will be asked to edit and critique other writing as well as make revisions based on edits and feedback from others. In small agencies or nonprofit communication positions, the writer may be the only writing specialist, and will be tasked with giving a variety of feedback on many projects.

**Last Semester**

Last semester, I required students to give written peer-review feedback on at least 5 assignments throughout the semester. I also had students peer-review each others’ work informally in some class sessions. I provided written feedback on all major assignments, and required all students to meet with me in a one-on-one session where I also gave feedback on their writing across all assignments. However, the quality of peer-review feedback that I saw fell short of my expectations. While I provided a sample outline for peer review feedback, much of it is in the
form of questions for the reviewer to consider (e.g., Does the writer show a good understanding of audience? Is the opening sentence attention-grabbing?). Ultimately, students have been answering these questions without giving detailed feedback (e.g., looking at the outline as a checklist and writing “Yes” to most questions).

Goals for This Semester
I believe the amount of opportunities I gave for providing and editing feedback is strong, but in the future I plan to drastically alter my peer review guidelines by giving explicit examples, spending a lot of time in class reviewing, and providing extensive guidelines for students to follow. I also plan to do better at modeling peer review through in-class examples throughout the semester.

3) Students should gain the ability to learn for themselves in order to prepare for novel situations in the workplace.

The world of professional strategic writing often requires the writer to understand a number of different tasks and figure out how to approach them without much guidance. On a given day, a nonprofit communication writer could be asked to write website copy, compose a company newsletter, put together flyers for events, send out press releases to reporters, solicit donations, or edit company manuals. Rather than teaching each version of this, I want to emphasize that students should be able to figure it out on their own with the tools they have at hand.

Last Semester
I tried to structure the course where I lectured on the fundamentals of a certain type of writing (e.g., a press release) and then gave them an unstructured in-class assignment. I also gave them a longer written assignment as homework. I tried to emphasize novel situations by assigning them topics (e.g., cover the Nebraska Rodeo, write copy for a green travel agency) that they might not know much about. While I believe this is a realistic approach to professional writing, I find that the students were not placing much passion or interest in these assignments and it was reflected in their writing.

Goals for This Semester
My goal moving forward is to incorporate a few (instead of all) of these random-topic assignments, but also to let them choose a company that they are interested in and write for it. I will emphasize novel situations by giving students short homework assignments that require them to read and learn independently, and keep in-class assignments with random topics while keeping longer out-of-class homework assignments limited to topics that students can choose themselves.

4) Students should think that writing can be rewarding, creative, and fun.

Last Semester
I taught the class with a strong emphasis on professional skills. Everything was framed for the profession—we didn’t have individual meetings, we had a “performance review.” Instead of extra credit, students must argue for a “raise.” Students had strict deadlines. Instead of excused
absences, they had a number of vacation and sick days. They were required to write professional, grammatically correct emails to me.

**Goals for This Semester**
In reflecting, I think this is not the approach I would like to take for a 200-level introductory writing course; it seems more appropriate for an advanced writing course designed for seniors about to hit the job market. I think framing things in such a strict, professional way in combination with the above discussion of giving students assignments on assorted and difficult topics was restricting student interest and passion in their writing. Class discussions were strained, and I think it has to do somewhat with the framing of the course.

If these are their chosen careers, I want to nurture an interest in writing for future semesters rather than make them fear it. I even had some students mention that they were afraid to write me an email with questions because their grammar in emails would be graded. As a result, I want to drastically alter the way that I frame the course. I still want to build professional skills, but more than anything I want to foster an interest and confidence in their own writing. I believe there is a way to have engaging assignments that place students in real-world situations that are based on existing student interests. I want them to feel comfortable in talking with me and about their writing to others.

5) **Students should learn appropriate professional conventions of format, structure, and grammar.**

**Last Semester**
Last semester, I gave students two in-class AP style and grammar quizzes. I devoted a day to lecturing on the nuances of AP style and common grammar mistakes. Students were told that their assignments would be graded on style and grammar.

**Goals for This Semester**
This semester I plan to institute weekly style and grammar quizzes. The quizzes can be retaken and the students will be encouraged to look up the correct answers in any way they can; in this way it should be more reflective of their abilities in a professional environment. I plan to build into the rubric on all assignments a section for professional conventions.

---

**Teaching Methods**
The course is taught for 3 hours one day a week. In trying to develop a more flipped style of learning, my goal was to minimize lecture time, increase group discussions and focus on detailed activities. See my initial syllabus for last semester’s course [here](#). See the changed, current syllabus [here](#).

**In-class**
Last semester I primarily lectured for the first half of class and did a group activity for the second half. I did my best to incorporate discussion and short activities into the lecture, but it was clear that students were becoming bored with the lecture material. Much of this was due to
the material in the class; as a beginning writing course I would cover grammar, AP style, and formatting for things like press releases or how a radio advertisement script should look. Because those lessons follow specific rules, it didn’t feel like I had an opportunity to offer much expertise, just to demonstrate the rules to them.

For the second half of class I would give students activities, which they seemed to enjoy more than the lecture, but then I felt like I was not contributing enough. Too often I would give them an assignment that would require research or writing, and I would sit at my desk while they worked. During these moments I felt like the students were only given time to do something that could be done outside of class.

Outside of Class
Outside of class, last semester I required that students 1) complete written peer review of other student work, 2) write posts where they acted as a social media manager for a celebrity or organization and 3) write a major course assignment each week. I believe that the peer review was a worthwhile exercise, but I found the quality of feedback was very poor. The social media manager posts I also thought were uninspiring and overall not a useful assignment for students. The major assignments I thought were strong exercises but ultimately asked students to write too much about things that they did not care about, and that indifference was reflected in the quality of their writing.

Illustrated Changes to Meet Course Goals & Rationale
1) Students should be capable of writing persuasively for a specific audience.

I built a specific section into the rubric that emphasized audience. I also heavily emphasized audience in my peer review guidelines. All student assignments included a discussion of target audience.

2) Students should gain the ability to give and receive quality feedback.

First, I changed the way I implemented peer review. Instead of providing an outline for students to answer, this semester I wrote an extensive guideline on how to write strong peer reviews and included model language and a detailed example. I also changed the way I discussed peer reviews, going through live work and modelling good techniques in the classroom. This was to prepare students to better give quality feedback.

Second, I incorporated a number of anonymous Google Doc in-class assignments. Students were required to write to a prompt on an anonymous group document that everyone could see. We would then go through student writing examples and critique it. As a result, students could view the writing of every other student without the pressure of having to read their own work, I was able to use student writing on the projector without calling out specific students, and students could comment without feeling bad about critiquing a specific peer. The anonymity was designed to help students better receive quality feedback.

3) Students should gain the ability to learn for themselves in order to prepare for novel situations in the workplace.
I shifted the focus of random topic assignments from outside of class to in-class activities. I worked to emphasize the application of these activities to the workplace. For example, last semester I gave students a press release assignment where they were given the description of an event and told to write a press release. This semester I paired students up and sent them out to campus organizations or businesses, had them quickly interview someone there, and come back and write up a release for a real upcoming event. Almost all students seemed to dread having to go out and talk with real people, but the positive feedback about the assignment was overwhelming when it was completed.

I also incorporated Class Preparation assignments into the course. These assignments were due each week before class. This was designed to get students to learn the rules to basic course materials (e.g., how a press release should look, how to format a resume) so I could focus lecture time less on explaining the rules and more on critiquing existing examples and creating activities. With this, I was able to shorten my lecture time drastically, focus on pointing out key rules, and stick to examples and activities. It also pushed students to learn to research and learn on their own to be prepared for any activity or assignment that might come up in class.

4) Students should think that writing can be rewarding, creative, and fun.

I did my best to incorporate some activities that were more group oriented and fun. When teaching about story, conflict, and narrative I gave students the tools for a tabletop RPG session, selected leaders and grouped students into groups that improvised constantly changing stories. When teaching about crisis communication management I broke students into a live, responsive audience, a reporter team, and a university crisis team and had them all interact in different ways.

I also allowed them to select their own topics for the majority of homework assignments. Last semester I gave students a predetermined topic for each major writing assignment. This semester I required students to create a fictional company in any area they had a strong interest. I then based almost all major assignments to relate to that company. Students were required to write weekly blog posts on themes related to the company. Students wrote press releases, made crisis strategies, wrote radio and television advertisements, and wrote banquet speeches all for their company. In this way I was hoping to restructure these assignments to be about a relevant topic that interested the student.

5) Students should learn appropriate professional conventions of format, structure, and grammar.

This semester, I changed my lecture format on AP style and grammar. Previously I gave two longer tests on these materials during the semester. On the second week of class, I gave a detailed lecture on common AP style guidelines and common grammar mistakes. This semester I wanted to put more of the specific formatting, grammar, and style structure in the students’ hands. I eliminated the lecture week from the syllabus and shifted to implanting weekly open-book quizzes that students took online. My intention was to have students get used to looking up these rules on their own and to be reminded on a more regular basis about style and grammar considerations.
Course Materials
Currently students are required to read *Everybody Writes*, a textbook that is assigned to all instructors of the course, and I give the rest of my materials online. I have yet to find a good use for the textbook and have struggled both semesters to incorporate it into the class. I believe that the websites I give for students to read are adequate resources, but I try more to emphasize that students look things up for themselves rather than read what I have assigned. As a result, in the Class Preparation assignment I’ll have students incorporate their own reading into the final product. For example, I’ll tell students to find and read three articles on how to write an effective social media headline, and then to write their own guide on headline writing as the Class Preparation assignment.

Analysis of Student Learning
1) Students should be capable of writing persuasively for a specific audience.

To assess audience considerations in their writing, I developed a rubric based off the ACE 1 learning outcomes rubric that included a section for writing. This rubric was used across all 9 major writing assignments and included an audience section. Specifically:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which the writing demonstrates awareness of readers’ anticipated knowledge, expectations, and/or values (out of 4).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4: The writer demonstrates in-depth awareness.
3: The writer demonstrates adequate awareness.
2: The writer demonstrates some awareness.
1: The writer demonstrates little or no awareness.

I then took the aggregated audience scores for three major assignments, the student’s first (M = 2.84, SD = .80), fifth (M = 3.56, SD = .49) and ninth (M = 3.20, SD = .58). Of particular interest is the difference between the first and fifth assignment, as both of these employed similar writing styles (writing a breaking news story and a news feature story). The ninth assignment required different audience considerations, as this required students to write television ads. Still, the results indicate significant differences between first and fifth (p < .001) and first and ninth (p < .001) assignments, with mean audience score higher relative to the initial score in the class.

2) Students should gain the ability to give and receive quality feedback.

Giving Quality Feedback

To assess whether students gained in their ability to write peer reviews, two analyses were conducted. First, I assessed word counts between this semester’s two sections and compared it to last semester’s class. I wanted to determine if the changes in my peer review instructions caused students to write in more detail on their first assignment. This semester’s students on
average wrote 247.54 words (SD = 155.411) and last semester’s wrote 220.00 (SD = 94.83). Although there was a greater mean number of words, this was not a significant difference, \(F(1,44) = .47, p = .50\). I then compared the change between the first and second major assignments on peer review word count. In this case, word count slightly decreased for this semester and increased for last semester (see figure). It is likely that the increase in last semester’s count was due to me adding the requirement that students must complete a peer review outline, answering 8 questions. The results indicate that my new method of instruction did not make much of a difference on peer review word counts this semester compared to last, but that the requirement of a completed outline was the most helpful.

Of course, word counts do little for examining quality of reviews. It is possible that students did not write more after my new instructions, but wrote better, higher quality feedback. After reviewing the reviews for the first assignment from both sections, it was clear that last semester’s group generally wrote peer reviews that very positive without giving the writer much substantive criticism. For example (critiques underlined):

*My initial reaction to your assignment is that it is very helpful! That’s awesome, because reporters can take information and write a great story from it It’s very clear what your topic is-the rodeo. You stay on topic and cover the important aspects. You wrote specific reasons of why the event needs to be covered. The flow of your writing is good- you start off answering the biggest question (What), and then continue on to give more information. I really like how you tailored your work for separate audiences. In these, I would be careful about using promotional words and focus more on information about the event. I like your idea of giving attendees a guest ticket! Overall, I think that this is a very informative piece!*

A number of the reviews from last semester looked like this one. In contrast, this semester had higher amount of critiques as well as examples on how to fix the problematic elements. For example:
First of all, this is pretty well-written and detailed. It has a lot of detail by form of in-depth information and statistics. Right off the bat, you may need to double-check on how AP says to write thousands; whether it’s 3,000 (like in par. 1) or 3 thousand (like in par. 6). I’m a little confused at the choice to use the word “creep” in the title. Did the Beatles creep? Because based on the description of how their debut went, it seems like they exploded. Don’t forget to include the location from which you’re reporting in the beginning too. I think the quote about buying more Beatles records is out of place. The story leads into it by bringing up how skeptical they were of their popularity, then is followed with a quip about wanting to sell records. To me, these two parts don’t go together. Some of the sentences are a bit long too. I think the piece could use a bit more concise, pointed language. Overall though, I really appreciate how the story organized. It flows chronologically, leading the reader through all the events of "Beatlemania."

Here, the student does a much better job of offering a number of critiques for the writer, although falls a bit short on suggestions for how to fix some of the problems. This review illustrates the “compliment sandwich” method I was teaching and gives the writer more to work with. Overall, I found the quality of this semester’s peer review critiques much higher, even without the required outline.

Receiving Quality Feedback

I asked students to end with a reflection on the course and what elements benefitted them the most. A number of students touched on their better ability to give good feedback and their understanding and appreciation for receiving good feedback. Some examples:

Previously, these seemed daunting and extremely hard, but by writing and being critiqued on a few of them I learned they aren’t actually that bad or that hard to write well. Having many opportunities to write and demonstrate everything we learned in this class was very effective, especially getting good feedback on it from classmates too.

I really appreciated the way that we did peer reviews as well, using the sandwich method to make sure we talked about good that the author did as opposed to only the bad stuff that needed fixing. This helped as a writer to not simply give up on a piece after receiving criticism.

Some of the things I will take with me in my future writing projects is that I need to proofread my work before I turn something in, and that I need to have others proofread my work before I turn something in as well.

3) Students should gain the ability to learn for themselves in order to prepare for novel situations in the workplace.

As part of my mid-semester survey I included the item “I feel like this class is helping prepare me for the workplace.” Of the 12 items on the survey, this question scored the highest average rating on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree; $M = 5.97$, $SD = .98$).

In addition, in their course reflection I asked students “how do you feel about your ability to write in a professional work environment?” All of the feedback was positive and encouraging.
However, this would have been better paired with a pre-test to see how student confidence grew over the course of the semester. Some examples:

_This class has improved the professional aspect of my writing as well. I used to think that professional writing was boring. I now realize that it can be more useful than any other type of writing...I plan on using different versions of those assignments as I apply for public relation jobs in the future._

_Focusing on different types of writing, from resumes and cover letters, to feature stories and company speeches, I was able to get a good idea of what I will need to carry with me throughout the course of college and for my career. In this way, after learning how to write all of these pieces, my ability to write effectively in the workplace has most certainly increased._

_Writing as a professional scared me, and still does, but now I feel I have the tools to effectively perform for a company on a variety of assignments. The activities in the class brought potential experiences to life and enabled me to think through what I could be hired to do someday._

_With the assignments that focused more on technical writing like press releases, I didn’t particularly enjoy them, but realized how beneficial it is to gain experience writing them because in the workplace those skills are going to be very prevalent. I’m glad I was able to gain exposure to this type of writing now, instead of when I actually need to know how to do it later in my life._

While I am glad that students seem to feel that they have developed important skills for the workplace, my assessment of this learning outcome did not much include the idea to see whether they could adapt to new, strange, or unfamiliar topics or assignments in the workplace. I did much to structure my class to focus on this adaptability, from students doing their own reading on class topics to incorporating a number of unfamiliar and fast-paced classroom activities.

4) _Students should think that writing can be rewarding, creative, and fun._

My mid-semester survey included the items “I am enjoying the class so far” ($M = 5.89$, $SD = 1.31$) and “the activities are interesting” ($M = 5.83$, $SD = .98$). Items were scored on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), and indicate that students seemed to enjoy their time in the course. A number of students also touched on this in their course reflections. Two examples:

_Most importantly, it was a class I always looked forward to attending. There are classes that are absolutely painful to sit through, but the in-class activities kept my mind engaged and made the projects easier to complete._

_However when I got going and started writing pieces that actually mattered to me, and that I actually had interest in, I found that I enjoyed writing and didn’t feel that I was as bad as I thought. Normally I think of writing as a task, a requirement by a class, etc but for all of these blog posts, and the media kit that incorporated my own business, I_
 actually looked forward to writing them and exploring my thoughts and creative freedom regarding something that I have a strong passion about.

From personal reflection and comparison to last semester’s course, it felt to me as if the students were enjoying things more. I made more efforts to put them in separate groups and tried to incorporate more fun and interesting activities.

5) Students should learn appropriate professional conventions of format, structure, and grammar.

The rubric I used for all nine major assignments included a convention section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which the writing consistently demonstrates appropriate use of organization/format, grammar, punctuation, style, and usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Consistently demonstrates good organization, no serious problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Usually demonstrates good organization, few serious problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Sometimes uses appropriate organization, some serious problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Rarely or never uses appropriate organization, frequent serious problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I then took the aggregated convention scores for three major assignments, the student’s first ($M = 3.00$, SD = .70), fifth ($M = 2.94$, SD = .82) and ninth ($M = 2.76$, SD = .83). Overall, the results indicate a downward trend in convention scores. It is possible that the ninth assignment required very different conventions (writing a television ad script) than the first and fifth assignments (writing news stories)

I also looked at scores on the first (9.53), fourth (9.94), eighth (9.85), and tenth (9.65) AP style and grammar quizzes (scores out of a maximum of 10 points). There was some variation between weeks, but the results did not indicate a particularly strong trend over time. It is likely that because these quizzes were given open-note with the ability to be retaken at least once that students did extremely well on the quizzes. As a result, it is difficult to tell whether this new style (weekly quizzes instead of two longer tests, no additional lecture on style or grammar) was more or less effective than the previous semester’s class.

Planned Changes

I have a number of areas where I am considering planned changes for next year, when I’ll be teaching the class again. Overall, I think that I did a good job this semester of redesigning the course and course activities to meet my goals, but that I did a poor job of assessing the true outcomes of those changes. Moving forward, I plan to make a number of changes to better communicate my goals to the students and to assess their effectiveness.

Instructor Reflections
It was suggested in the Peer Review meetings that one useful tool to assess course outcomes is to incorporate instructor reflections. Moving forward, I plan to make the effort to write down a brief set of notes immediately after each class that reflects my thoughts about the material, the usefulness of the activities, and how the course met or did not meet different course learning outcomes. I think this log will be extremely useful when reteaching the course and could be something to potentially pass along to new instructors, as well as demonstrate to the administration a strong desire to improve my teaching.

**Rubric Revisions**

I had grand plans this semester of One Rubric to Rule Them All. I used the ACE 1 rubric with some minor changes in order to best track student learning across the semester. With a single, consistent rubric for each assignment I could easily track how students develop their understanding in audience, research, conventions, documentation, innovation, and purpose. At least, that was my justification. A single rubric should demonstrate to students the important elements of the course (e.g., writing for an audience) and reemphasize these points with each assignment.

On reflection, I think the general one-size-fits-all rubric I used for the assignments was not helpful to the students, and it was not helpful to me doing grading. The assignments themselves are often very different. Some assignments require practicing very specific and established ways of writing; in these styles it is frowned upon to deviate from the script. Yet innovation and creativity was a section on the rubric, and that section did not much apply to these assignments as it did to others. I believe that the single rubric also caused students to pay much less attention to it; I brought it up a few times in class but no students ever mentioned it to me or indicated they viewed its scoring at all.

Next semester, I plan to write separate rubrics for each individual assignment. This will allow me to better convey my exact expectations for each assignment and remove some of the subjectivity that it felt I was inviting with the single rubric (e.g., some assignments were free writing, and students did not have to follow any format or structure—should they receive a perfect score on the “conventions” rubric section?). These specific rubrics should also speed up grading—instead of having to write that a student lost points because they deviated from the two-column script format for television advertising writing (and marking a 2 on the conventions section of the rubric), I could write into the rubric something more detailed like “Ad Script Conventions: uses two-column format, clearly outlines sound effects, camera cuts.”

**Pre and Post Tests on Course Goals**

The most obvious addition to the course next semester would be to implement a simple survey that assesses my course goals at the beginning and end of the semester. Items such as “I find writing to be creative, rewarding, and fun” and “If there was an assignment I had never seen before at work, I feel confident that I could figure it out.” My original thinking was that the single, consistent rubric would allow me to track these changes in outcomes in even more detail at nine points across the semester, but the radically different versions of the assignment made comparison over time or between assignments very difficult, even with the same rubric.
**Better Assessment of Writing for an Audience**

Despite the consistent audience section on the rubric, I felt that the course could have benefitted more from additional methods of assessing whether students could write for an audience. This was, after all, my primary course goal. I think that students should get feedback from an actual audience. Next year, I plan to do this in three different ways. First, for the student’s feature writing assignment (which requires them to do a lengthy interview with a friend or family member and write a piece about that person’s experiences) I want to give students a feedback sheet and give the finished piece to the subject. The subject will then read the piece and give written feedback to the student about whether the story matches the subject’s experience. In this way the student should view their interviewee as both a subject of the piece and a potential audience member. Second, I plan to incorporate online writing assignments for content distribution platforms such as Reddit or Buzzfeed Community. These stories rise based entirely on audience reviews, so students will have the opportunity to research for an audience and watch as their different attempts appeal to the reading community. Third, I plan to incorporate more detailed audience research assignments throughout the semester. Instead of only thinking about what the audience might want, students should learn to research audience needs and interests.

**Style and Grammar Quizzes**

Without a pre-test, it is difficult to understand how students might have grown in their knowledge of grammar and AP style concerns. This topic has been a struggle as an instructor, as I vary between believing these students need to be exposed to grammar and style in a basic writing course and believing that students entering a college-level writing course should be expected to have a good understanding of grammar and style. As I taught it, it felt like this goal was in direct opposition to the goal that writing should be thought of as creative, rewarding, and fun. What’s less fun than grammar lessons and quizzes?

Moving forward, I want to find a better way to reconcile these two goals. That could mean incorporating weekly Jeopardy-style class quizzes on grammar and style to get students more interested. I plan to bring back at least some of the lecture on style and grammar.

**Better Illustration of Course Goals to Students**

As I looked through my syllabus on reflection for this semester, I realized that while I spent a lot of time working on the assignments and course schedule to meet my new learning goals, I never wrote those out for the students. The syllabus includes language for the ACE and ACEJMC learning outcomes, but makes no mention of the goals that I created. This was quite an oversight, and moving forward I plan to better spell out both exactly what I want to accomplish in the course and describe how each given assignment is designed to accomplish a particular goal.

**New Goal: Incorporate Research Into Writing**

I also decided that I needed to formally include a research component into my course goals. I required a research element in most of my assignments, but I did not take the time in the course to describe good research tools or habits. Research is a crucial component to understanding
audience needs, and I plan to explicitly build in more detailed research requirements into my major assignment rubrics.

**New Goal: Writing for a Digital Audience**

I believe that I spent a bit too much time emphasizing the traditional forms of strategic writing: press releases, news stories, speeches, print, radio, and television advertisements. I want to incorporate more specific digital writing requirements, assignments, and lectures into my course next semester because it will be more directly relevant to the student workplace and it should allow for some more interesting and compelling examples. Students interact with digital writing every day, and I want them to grow in their ability to write for a digital audience.

**Summary & Overall Assessment of Portfolio Process**

The Peer Review of Teaching program and the portfolio process have been very influential on my teaching. The backwards-design style of syllabus development dramatically changed the way I taught the course this semester. I put a large amount of time working to develop course goals that I thought would be most beneficial to students and other stakeholders. I then kept these goals in mind as I went through my existing assignments, lectures, methods, and activities and ultimately I think the work paid off: students seemed to enjoy the class more and turn in stronger writing than last year’s class.

I also realize that even with the guidance of the program I could have done much more for the assessment phase of the portfolio. I think I spent more time thinking about assessments that would give me the best data, and not necessarily assessments that would benefit the students the most. I enjoy the structured form of syllabus development and plan to use it for future classes and recommend the program to colleagues. I have also developed important connections with other instructors that I know will be helpful for future teaching concerns.

On a personal level, I also greatly benefitted from discussions of how to demonstrate a commitment to teaching to a tenure committee. As a first year professor, I had never considered ways that I might demonstrate teaching prowess beyond student evaluations. This program was immensely helpful to me in figuring out how to quantify my teaching effort in new ways.
Appendix 1: Fall 2016 Course Syllabus

ADPR 221: Strategic Writing for ADPR
333 Andersen Hall
9:30 – 11:50 Monday

University of Nebraska-Lincoln – College of Journalism & Mass Communications
Advertising & Public Relations

Course: ADPR 221, Fall 2016
Time: 9:30 – 11:50 Monday
Location: ANDN 333

Instructor: Michael Hanus, Ph.D.
Office: 307 Andersen Hall
Email: mhanus2@unl.edu
Office Hours: Generally most times on Mondays & Wednesdays, or by appointment.

Course Description: ADPR 221 introduces advertising and public relations writing styles and techniques to develop effective, goal-oriented communications designed for diverse audiences, tactics and media. This course spans objective news-style writing to digital storytelling, persuasive ad copywriting and promotional direct marketing.

Required Course Resources:

- “Everybody Writes,” by Ann Handley (University Bookstore, online booksellers or iTunes)
- The Associated Press Stylebook, 2015 Edition (online and mobile AP stylebooks available at ap.org)
- Blackboard access at: http://my.unl.edu

Recommended Supplemental Resources:

- The Elements of Style, Third Edition by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White
- Industry Trades: Adweek, Ad Age, PR Week, On the Media, Wired, Fast Company

Learning Outcomes:

UNL’s Achievement-Centered General Education Program (ACE)

This course meets ACE Student Learning Outcome #1. Students will:
• Write texts, in various forms, with an identified purpose, that respond to specific audience needs, incorporate research or existing knowledge, and use applicable documentation and appropriate conventions of format and structure.

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC)

UNL’s CoJMC holds accreditation from the ACEJMC, which aims to support excellence and high standards within journalism and mass communications professional education. The ACEJMC recommends all graduates demonstrate certain core values and competencies. ADPR 221 addresses the following competencies:

• Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes
• Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness

After completing this course, students will demonstrate awareness, understanding and application of course concepts and content.

• Students will demonstrate awareness of multimedia writing styles, techniques and tactics central to the advertising and public relations professions.
• Students will demonstrate understanding of strategic writing strategies – researching, creating and editing specific written tactics with the clear purpose of enabling integrated communications and overall corporate/brand/non-profit goals.
• Students will demonstrate understanding and application of versatile, goal-oriented writing designed for diverse audiences, tactics and media. Students will demonstrate competency in adapting message “voice” or tone, storytelling approach and writing styles across genres.

Grading: Grading will consist of the following:

• Social Media Management 10%
• Performance Review 5%
• In-class assignments 15%
• Peer Review 10%
• Style & Grammar Quizzes 10%
• Final Portfolio 50%
  • Check-ins 10%
  • Finished Product 35%
  • Reflection 5%

All assignments will be uploaded to the course website with specific details prior to the due date.
All grading will use the standard UNL letter grade system. There will be no rounding of final grades. There may be opportunities for extra credit.

**Peer Review (10%)**: You are expected to conduct useful evaluation of your peers’ work. You will be required to do 5 written peer reviews during the semester. These evaluations will be due one week after the assignment’s due date. You will be told which assignments require peer review in class.

**Style & Grammar Quiz (10%)**: Journalists prefer that press releases are written in AP Style, so they can publish them with less editing. In addition, good grammar and punctuation skills are critical to performing well in the course. Over the course of the semester you’ll be given 2 – 3 grammar and style quizzes.

**Social Media Management (10%)**: For this assignment, after the first week of the course you will be expected to pick a celebrity or organization. During the course of the semester you will be required to follow news events regarding that individual and post to Twitter (on a private account) as if you were hired as a social media manager. This requires reading the news each day about your client and posting accordingly. You should cover major occurrences, bring readers’ attention to upcoming events, or even run damage control.

**Performance Review (5%)**: In the middle of the semester, we will have 10-minute individual meetings to discuss your current performance in the course. To prepare for this, you should have prepared a document that contains your work before the current date, as well as a clear assessment of your participation, attendance, and peer review skills. You will be graded on your preparation document and professional manner during the meeting.

We will discuss ways to improve and set goals for the rest of the semester. If you believe your work has been exceptional, you may ask for a “raise” during this review (this request should be included in the packet). Based on your performance and argument, you may be given up to 2% extra credit.

**Final Portfolio (50%)**: The majority of your class grade will consist of a final portfolio that you will submit of your class work. This will consist of many assignments that you have done in class and then edited into an improved form. This should highlight your skills with communication and should come in a form that you could bring and show on a real job interview. It will also consist of a few additional assignments. Details will be posted on Carmen further through the semester.

**Attendance & Participation**: Attending class is important. In a professional environment you are given an allotment of sick or vacation days, with no-call no-show absences unacceptable. You are given one vacation day and two sick days. These will count as excused absences. In order for an absence to be excused, you must notify me by email. For a sick day, you must notify me before the class’s starting time. To use a vacation day, you must notify me at least 12 hours in advance of the class’s starting time. Failure to properly notify me will result in an unexcused
absence. Any unexcused absence (even if you have sick/vacation days remaining) will result in a 1/3 deduction of your final letter grade (e.g., a B+ to a B, a C- to a D+).

It will be possible to negotiate for more sick or vacation days during the course.

As in the workplace, verbal participation and communication with your peers and supervisors is extremely important. Being an active contributor during class and during group work is a basic expectation. This includes being prepared for course lessons by reading the assigned material and having everything you need for class. In contrast, not participating, sleeping, checking your phone, being late, or doing other tasks can be detrimental to your work relationships. Poor participation can result in up to 10% off your final course grade.

Technology Policy: Slides will be provided online at the course website. Laptops, cell-phones, or other technology are not permitted to be used during class unless explicitly directed otherwise. Repeated use of cell phones during class will result in subtractions from your overall participation grade.

Academic Integrity
Every student must adhere to the policy on academic integrity set forth in the UNL Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the UNL Bulletin. Students who plagiarize may receive a failing grade on an assignment or for an entire course and may be reported to the Student Judicial Review Board. The work a student submits in a class must be the student's own work and must be work completed for that particular class and assignment. Students wishing to build on an old project or work on a similar project in two classes must discuss this with both professors. Academic dishonesty includes:

- handing in another's work or part of another's work as your own.
- turning in one of your old papers (including something you wrote in high school) for a current class.
- turning in the same or similar paper for two different classes,
- using notes or other study aids or otherwise obtaining another's answers for a quiz or an examination.

Anything and everything you include in your papers that comes from another source must be attributed with proper citation. That includes ideas and opinions.

Plagiarism consists of using phrases, sentences or paragraphs from any source and republishing them without alteration or attribution. The sources include, but are not limited to, books, magazines, newspapers, television or radio reports, Web sites and other students’ papers.

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the
University of Nebraska—Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

**Diversity**
The College of Journalism and Mass Communications values diversity, in the broadest sense of the word – gender, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, income, religion, education, geographic, physical and mental ability or disability, sexual orientation. We recognize that understanding and incorporating diversity in the curriculum enables us to prepare our students for careers as professional communicators in a global society. As communicators, we understand that journalism, advertising and other forms of strategic communication must reflect society in order to be effective and reliable. We fail as journalists if we are not accurate in our written, spoken and visual reports; including diverse voices and perspectives improves our accuracy and truthfulness. In advertising, we cannot succeed if we do not understand the value of or know how to create advertising that reflects a diverse society and, thus, appeals to broader audiences.

The information provided in this syllabus constitutes a list of basic class policies. I reserve the right to modify this information when deemed necessary for any reason. You will be notified in class, via email, and/or on Blackboard if and when any changes occur.
The below schedule represents a tentative outline of topics throughout the semester. It will often be revised as we make progress, but the major due dates will remain the same unless otherwise noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 22</td>
<td>General Course Introduction &amp; Syllabus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 29</td>
<td>Goal-Oriented Writing, Style, &amp; Grammar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Labor Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 12</td>
<td>The Basics of Newswriting, Headlines, &amp; Calls to Action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 19</td>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 26</td>
<td>Feature Storytelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td>Writing for the Internet &amp; Social Media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 10</td>
<td>Selling Yourself: Resumes, Cover Letters, &amp; Application Essays</td>
<td>Review Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 17</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 24</td>
<td>Performance Reviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 31</td>
<td>Interviews &amp; Client Preparation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td>Speech Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 14</td>
<td>Crisis Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>Writing for Advertising 1 – Print &amp; Digital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 28</td>
<td>Writing for Advertising 2 – Broadcast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 5</td>
<td>Writing for Sales &amp; Promotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE</td>
<td>Review Materials 11:59pm to Blackboard Monday, December 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADPR 221: Strategic Writing for ADPR
324 Andersen Hall

University of Nebraska-Lincoln – College of Journalism & Mass Communications
Advertising & Public Relations

Course: ADPR 221, Spring 2017
Time: 2 – 4:45 Tuesday (Section 005), or 12:30-3:20 Wednesday (Section 006)
Location: ANDN 324

Instructor: Michael Hanus, Ph.D.
Office: 307 Andersen Hall
Email: mhanus2@unl.edu
Office Hours: Generally most times on Tuesdays & Wednesdays, or by appointment.

Course Description: ADPR 221 introduces advertising and public relations writing styles and techniques to develop effective, goal-oriented communications designed for diverse audiences, tactics and media. This course spans objective news-style writing to digital storytelling, persuasive ad copywriting and promotional direct marketing.

Required Course Resources:
- “Everybody Writes,” by Ann Handley (University Bookstore, online booksellers or iTunes)
- Canvas access at: http://canvas.unl.edu

Recommended Supplemental Resources:
- The Elements of Style, Third Edition by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White
- Industry Trades: Adweek, Ad Age, PR Week, On the Media, Wired, Fast Company

Learning Outcomes:

UNL’s Achievement-Centered General Education Program (ACE)

This course meets ACE Student Learning Outcome #1. Students will:
- Write texts, in various forms, with an identified purpose, that respond to specific audience needs, incorporate research or existing knowledge, and use applicable documentation and appropriate conventions of format and structure
The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC)

UNL’s CoJMC holds accreditation from the ACEJMC, which aims to support excellence and high standards within journalism and mass communications professional education. The ACEJMC recommends all graduates demonstrate certain core values and competencies. ADPR 221 addresses the following competencies:

- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness

After completing this course, students will demonstrate awareness, understanding and application of course concepts and content.

- Students will demonstrate awareness of multimedia writing styles, techniques and tactics central to the advertising and public relations professions.
- Students will demonstrate understanding of strategic writing strategies – researching, creating and editing specific written tactics with the clear purpose of enabling integrated communications and overall corporate/brand/non-profit goals.
- Students will demonstrate understanding and application of versatile, goal-oriented writing designed for diverse audiences, tactics and media. Students will demonstrate competency in adapting message “voice” or tone, storytelling approach and writing styles across genres.

Grading: Grading will consist of the following:

- Company Blog Posts & Social Media 10%
- Class Preparation Materials 10%
- Peer Review 10%
- Grammar & Style Quizzes 10%
- Major Writing Assignments 50% (5% each)
  - Understanding Audience
  - Historical Event Coverage
  - Company Media Kit
  - Persuasive Story
  - Feature Story
  - Company Speech
  - Company Crisis Response
  - Print Ads
  - Radio Ads
  - TV Ads
- Final Portfolio 10%
All assignments will be uploaded to the course website with specific details prior to the due date.

All grading will use the standard UNL letter grade system. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due on their assigned date by the beginning of class time. Late assignments will not receive credit. There will be no rounding of final grades. There may be opportunities for extra credit.

Assignment Submission: All documents must be submitted as Microsoft Word or .pdf documents. Any other formats will not be accepted.

Peer Review (10%): You are expected to conduct useful evaluation of your peers’ work. You will be required to do 10 written peer reviews during the semester. These evaluations will be due one week after the assignment’s due date. You will be told which assignments require peer review in class.

Style & Grammar Quiz (10%): Over the course of the semester, you’ll be given weekly online quizzes covering common grammar issues and AP Style. Each quiz will contain both grammar and style questions. These quizzes are open book, use whatever online source you can find. Your weekly quiz will be due by 11:59pm Sunday night of each week.

Company Blog Posts & Social Media (10%): As part of the class, you will create a fictional company based on a product or service you are interested in. Each week, you will write a blog post for your company with the goal of getting people interested and drawn to your website. You will also include posts for social media. Exact details will be outlined in class. Your blog post will be due by 11:59pm Sunday night of each week.

Class Preparation Materials (10%): Each week, you will be given an assignment in order to prepare for the following class. This could range from reading materials, bringing in examples, reading slides, or bringing in early work. This will help facilitate discussion and prepare you for each day’s activities. The specification for each day will be outlined on Canvas and due at the beginning of each class.

Major Writing Assignments (50%): Over the course of the semester you’ll be presented with 10 major assignments. Each assignment is worth 5%, will be detailed in class, and then due the following week.

Final Portfolio (10%): The final portfolio will be comprised of a selection from your major assignments. These assignments should be edited and improved based on feedback from the first time you turned them in during the semester. Details will be posted on Canvas further through the semester.

Attendance & Participation: You will be given two excused absences over the course of the semester. For an absence to count as excused, you must email me before the time class
starts, or it will count as an unexcused absence. Any unexcused absence (even if you have excused absences you have not used) will result in -3% off your final course grade.

Being an active contributor during class and during group work is a **basic expectation**. This includes being prepared for course lessons by reading the assigned material and having everything you need for class. In contrast, not participating, sleeping, checking your phone, **being late**, or doing other tasks can be detrimental to your work relationships. Poor participation can result in up to 10% off your final course grade.

**Technology Policy:** Slides will be provided online at the course website. **Laptops, cell-phones, or other technology are not permitted to be used during class unless explicitly directed otherwise.** Repeated use of cell phones during class will result in subtractions from your overall participation grade.

**Academic Integrity**

Every student must adhere to the policy on academic integrity set forth in the UNL Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the UNL Bulletin. Students who plagiarize may receive a failing grade on an assignment or for an entire course and may be reported to the Student Judicial Review Board. The work a student submits in a class must be the student's own work and must be work completed for that particular class and assignment. Students wishing to build on an old project or work on a similar project in two classes must discuss this with both professors. Academic dishonesty includes:

- handing in another's work or part of another's work as your own.
- turning in one of your old papers (including something you wrote in high school) for a current class.
- turning in the same or similar paper for two different classes,
- using notes or other study aids or otherwise obtaining another's answers for a quiz or an examination.

Anything and everything you include in your papers that comes from another source must be attributed with proper citation. That includes ideas and opinions.

Plagiarism consists of using phrases, sentences or paragraphs from any source and republishing them without alteration or attribution. The sources include, but are not limited to, books, magazines, newspapers, television or radio reports, Web sites and other students’ papers.

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska---Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services,
students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Diversity
The College of Journalism and Mass Communications values diversity, in the broadest sense of the word – gender, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, income, religion, education, geographic, physical and mental ability or disability, sexual orientation. We recognize that understanding and incorporating diversity in the curriculum enables us to prepare our students for careers as professional communicators in a global society. As communicators, we understand that journalism, advertising and other forms of strategic communication must reflect society in order to be effective and reliable. We fail as journalists if we are not accurate in our written, spoken and visual reports; including diverse voices and perspectives improves our accuracy and truthfulness. In advertising, we cannot succeed if we do not understand the value of or know how to create advertising that reflects a diverse society and, thus, appeals to broader audiences.
The information provided in this syllabus constitutes a list of basic class policies. I reserve the right to modify this information when deemed necessary for any reason. You will be notified in class, via email, and/or on Blackboard if and when any changes occur.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Major Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 10</td>
<td>General Course Introduction &amp; Syllabus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 17</td>
<td>The Keys To Success: Productivity, Brainstorming, Outlining &amp; Drafting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 24</td>
<td>Goal-Oriented Writing, Research, &amp; Audience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 31</td>
<td>The Basics of Newswriting, Headlines, &amp; Calls to Action</td>
<td>Understanding Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 7</td>
<td>Brand Journalism, Media Kits, &amp; Press Releases</td>
<td>Historical Event Coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 14</td>
<td>Conflict, Narrative, &amp; Story</td>
<td>Company Media Kit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 21</td>
<td>Feature Writing &amp; Interviews</td>
<td>Persuasive Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 28</td>
<td>Powerful, Persuasive Speech Writing</td>
<td>Feature Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 7</td>
<td>Individual Meeting Week</td>
<td>Company Speech &amp; Meeting Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Resumes &amp; Cover Letter Workshop</td>
<td>Bring Resume &amp; Cover Letter Draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 21</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 28</td>
<td>Quick Responses &amp; Crisis Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4</td>
<td>Headlines, Visuals, &amp; Print Advertising</td>
<td>Company Crisis Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11</td>
<td>Script Writing, Sound Effects, &amp; Radio Advertising</td>
<td>Print Ad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18</td>
<td>Storyboarding &amp; Television Advertising</td>
<td>Radio Spot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25</td>
<td>Internet, Outdoor, &amp; Interactive Ad Writing</td>
<td>TV Storyboard &amp; Script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, May 1 @11:59pm to Canvas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Course Rubric

**Purpose** – The extent to which writing reflects clearly discernable goals (implicit or explicit) without unintended departures from genre expectations.
4: Writing reflects clearly discernable goals with no serious unintended departures.
3: …reflects identifiable goals with few serious unintended departures
2: …reflects goals that are only somewhat clear with several serious unintended departures
1: …does not reflect goals with numerous serious unintended departures

**Audience**—The extent to which writing demonstrates awareness of readers’ anticipated knowledge, expectations, and/or values
4: Writing demonstrates in-depth awareness
3: …demonstrates adequate awareness
2: …demonstrates some awareness
1: …demonstrates limited or no awareness

**Research or Existing Knowledge**—Extent to which writing integrates knowledge and information collected from well-chosen sources in appropriate ways
4: Writing fully integrates knowledge and information from well-chosen sources
3: …includes knowledge and information from adequate sources
2: …sometimes includes knowledge or collection information but in inaccurate or inappropriate ways
1: …includes little or no knowledge or collected information

**Documentation**—Extent to which writing demonstrates appropriate and accurate citation and attribution/acknowledgement of sources and/or evidence.
4: Writing consistently demonstrates appropriate and accurate citation and attribution
3: …usually demonstrates appropriate and accurate citation
2: …attempts to demonstrate citation and attribution but sometimes inappropriately or incorrectly
1: …rarely or never demonstrates appropriate and accurate citation and attribution

**Conventions**—Extent to which writing demonstrates appropriate and use of organization/format, grammar, punctuations and usage
4: Writing consistently demonstrates appropriate and use of organization/format, grammar, punctuation with no serious problems
3: …usually demonstrates appropriate use; few serious problems
2: …sometimes uses appropriate organization/format; some serious problems
1: …rarely or never uses appropriate organization/format; frequent serious problems

**Innovation**—The extent to which the ideas demonstrated show originality and creativity
4: Writing demonstrates clear originality in ideas and creativity in approach
3: …demonstrates some originality and attempts to deviate from standard approaches
2: …ideas and execution are only somewhat original or creative
1: …ideas presented are given little thought and lack originality.
Appendix 4: Peer Review Guidelines

Guidelines for Good Peer Review

Getting Started

1) Read the piece first. Don’t read and write and read and write. Get a feel for the whole thing, from start to finish. If you want to make a few mental notes (or written ones) to remind you some points you thought of, go for it.

2) After you have finished reading, think about your impression of the piece. Overall, how did you feel after the piece? Did it strike you emotionally? Was it interesting? Did you find it well-argued? Was it scattered or confusing? Were you bored?

3) Next, think about places that were odd to you. Did some sentences stop you from the reading flow? Did you find yourself having to go back and read something again because it was confusing? Did you have to rethink about the assignment? What wasn’t clear?

4) Next, think about audience. Who was the piece trying to reach? If you were a member of that audience, how would you feel after reading? Did the language fit the audience? Did the tone? Would the audience be particularly engaged or bored, or felt stupid by the piece? What were areas that could have done a better job appealing to the audience? What could be added to further improve the piece for the audience?

5) Think about your review as basic concepts. If you had to explain the very quick version of your critique, what are the main points you would mention? For example, it could be organization, confusing, and quotation marks. Or boring opening, unoriginal idea, and needs more sources. Or Should interview new person, delete fourth paragraph, title not clear. It can be more than three things.

Time to Write

1) Remember the compliment sandwich. Open with something positive. What was one of the best things about the piece? What stood out to you? Overall, what did the piece do well? Don’t go on and on with positives, give a compliment and move into the critique.

2) Take those main concepts you thought of and start giving details about them, one by one. The key is to be specific in describing the problem and giving an example for how to fix it.

   a. For example, instead of writing “Bad organization” you should think about what went wrong and give suggestions for how to fix it. “I think the piece changes in focus from section to section. It can be a bit confusing to see it shift from the perspective of the judge to the perspective of the witness so quickly. I would consider deleting the witness perspective entirely and write the piece only from the eyes of the judge. He was the most compelling
character in the piece and I think that would bring together the story in a more
tight an focused way.”

b. If you do not both clearly describe the problem AND give a solution, your
review is not going to be helpful. Make sure to include both.

3) Proceed to flesh out all your main points with clear descriptions and examples
solutions.

4) Finish with another compliment.

**Things to Keep in Mind**

**Make Them Cry**

When I say “make them cry” I don’t mean to literally try to do that by saying mean things or in a
cruel tone. I mean that you should look at their piece with the idea of ripping it into tiny shreds.
You should notice every single problem and be ruthless about seeing faults. THEN you should
point these faults out in a way that gives them something to work with, in a tone that doesn’t
completely crush their spirit.

**WriteING not WriteER**

A good way not to literally make someone cry, or hate you, or automatically reject everything
you say is to talk ONLY about the piece of writing. You should never mention “you” or “the
writer/author” or anything like that. You should only mention the writing/work/piece/article/post/ad/whatever it is.

Wrong: The organization in this piece needs some work. You move from section to section in a
confusing way, it is hard for the reader to follow.

Good: The organization in this piece could be refined for clarity. The ideas change quickly from
section to section in a way that is hard for the reader to follow, for example in the third paragraph
it talks about baseball and in the fourth it talks about cooking with no clear connection between
them.

**Editing vs. Revision**

Editing is big things (where does a paragraph go? Is it needed? Is this interesting? Does it appeal
to the audience?). Revision is small things (This comma is wrong. This name needs capitalized).

You should focus 95% of your critique on EDITS not REVISION. If the grammar is crazy, it
might be worthwhile to make that one of your main concepts (See Getting Started #5), giving
clear examples and some example sentences to point it out. But you need to focus on the big
picture important concepts, not small grammatical ones.

**Hedging**

A good way to make people dislike you is when you tell them things are wrong without room for
error. And some points you’re making really are subjective, and it’s your opinion against theirs.
So, instead of saying that they must fix A, B, and C, or that this section IS wrong, consider some hedging language.

Aggressive: The organization IS unclear. The lead IS boring. The audience WILL NOT LIKE your tone.

Hedging. The organization FEELS unclear. TO ME, the lead does not grab MY attention. I WOULD CONSIDER changing the tone to make it more appealing to the audience.

What If I Can’t Find Any Problems?

This happens to everyone. Sometimes you get a piece that’s so well worked, or you think the writer is so much better than you that you can’t find anything wrong to point out. The piece checks all the requirements of the assignment, it appeals well to the audience, it is interesting and compelling, done deal, let’s move on with life.

Nah. If you come across a piece like this, the first thing to think is I really didn’t read it that closely. If you read it again and still find zero faults, the next step is to suggest other things that could be useful.

Even the most perfect writers need some feedback. And that feedback from you can be suggestions on how to go above and beyond, or how to try a new angle, or where to find a new source. Give them stuff to work with. Even if they read your ideas and say ‘nah, that’s not for the piece’ that’s ok, at least you made them think about it.

For example: The assignment doesn’t require it, but it could be really neat if you added pictures into this post, and arranged the content around each picture. That might help up the appeal to your audience even more.

For example: You might think about starting with the final scene first, and then cutting to the beginning and working your way back. That could be a neat way to shake up the narrative as the final scene is so compelling.

For example: You cover all the details needed in this press release, but it might be helpful if you dug into and found out what opportunities for volunteers there are.

An Example

Hi Dale,

Overall I think this piece does a really good job gripping you right from the beginning. The opening is interesting and compelling, and makes the reader want to dive in more.

However, after the strong opening the piece tends to shift in focus. The opening is all about how robots could take over the world, but the second paragraph quickly shifts into the history of computers and electronics. There is no clear connection from the opening into the history. The history is important information, but I would work to draw a clear transition to going back into
history. For example, I might add a sentence that says “As Kongo looked across the desolate wasteland, he wondered how it all began” at the end of your first paragraph.

It is also a bit hard to figure out the main point of the story, particularly from the beginning. The piece moves from robot apocalypse to history of computers, and then it ends on a note talking about how sensors are becoming cheaper and will dramatically change everyday life. Is the main point that robots and artificial intelligence are bad? That sensors will impact us today? Is the focus on the present, or the future? I think you have a lot of good points that you make, but ultimately it would help to pick a clear focus from the beginning and draw that through your story throughout. If it’s all about sensors, I might shift the opening scene to be more about sensors than thinking moving robots, and make sure to talk about sensors in the history of computers and electronics.

Finally, I think it might help if the conclusion ended on a stronger note. Right now the story kind of drops off and you end with one sentence that says “Thus, sensors will completely change our lives.” But the reader needs some real closure here, and that ends the nice story throughout the piece so quickly. I would think about really fleshing out the conclusion, so it’s clear the implications of the technology and you can reiterate your main point. Think about the idea to leave your readers with (or perhaps a lasting image that ties it back to the opening scene).

I really liked your description and attention to detail throughout. You did so much research! I think that the content is there, and with some additional work on pulling it together this piece could be really strong.
Appendix 5: Sample Class Preparation Assignments

1) Take notes on audience writing handout, outlining major points. Try one of the productivity tools or methods outlined this week. Write a 1-2 paragraph response about your experience using it.

Decide, and write down, your class company. Select a name for the company, and write a brief paragraph giving a description of the company and describing what kinds of material you will cover in your blog posts about the company.

Submit this as a single document under the Assignments page.

2) Read:

Everybody Writes, p. 156-173

http://handbook.reuters.com/?title=Reporting_and_Writing_Basics (Links to an external site.)

Write:

Notes on the Basics of Newswriting

Outline 5 key points to remember when it comes to newswriting. After the 5 key points, include at least three other helpful tips or things to keep in mind when it comes to newswriting. Format this as a professional looking guideline explaining newswriting to new students. No longer than 1 page single-spaced.

2 paragraphs defining your company’s target audience.

Who are they? What do they like? What do they do? What tone would work best for them? What blog post format? Describe your audience in detail, and describe how you found this information out.

3) Read:

Textbook pgs. 141-149. Read: Press Release Readings (posted under course Files). Sorry, this is the worst scanned document ever.

Write: General, bullet-point notes of important points from textbook and readings. No more than 1 page single-spaced. Focus on key points and themes. Study the format of the press release for future activities.

Find: 3 examples of press releases from different fields (for example, sports, technology, food) and bring in the links to their webpages. Include these on the notes from above.
Appendix 6: Crisis Communication In-Class Activity

UNL Social Media & Crisis Team

You represent the UNL public relations team. You are split into 4 groups, please decide amongst yourselves:

1 “CEO” and speech giver/question taker. Your job is to make sure you know what’s going on between the different branches and coordinate between them. You’ll be delivering the public statement and taking questions from reporters.

2 public statement writers. You’ll work with the CEO to write a good public statement that takes into account what’s going on. You should start to develop different statements based on the events and revise as necessary.

2 reporter respondents. You’ll respond to reporter inquiries, and monitor the news page for what is being reported. You should be prepared to give an assessment to the CEO when asked and update as needed.

3 social media respondents. You’ll monitor social media activity and work to respond to various posts representing UNL’s official stance. You will also report to CEO with social media activity (what people are talking about, what is a crisis brewing).

Scenario:

It is the move-in day to kick off the 2016-17 school year at the University of Nebraska. So far, things are going pretty smoothly as parents and students come in and get used to the new dorms. Three notable things come on to your radar over the course of the morning:

1) There is a protest inside the union. At least 50 people have gotten together, with signs, to protest unfair wages for staff and non-tenured lecturers. So far this protest has been conducted without incident, but it is definitely drawing eyes from all the people passing through.

2) There has been a brawl between two fraternities. Each were out as part of the Greek Move-in Lemonade Stand for Charity Tradition and an incident broke out between two neighboring houses, Alpha Tau Omega and Chi Phi. It didn’t take long for a huge fight to start and the police were called to break up the incident. No one was majorly hurt, but there are certainly scrapes and bruises on both sides. At least 10 different students were involved.

3) You received a report from a housekeeping staff member at the Selleck Residence Hall. The staff had gone into a room to bring materials to clean a particularly bad beverage spill, and noticed signs of bed bugs in the lining of one of the student beds. Both students were in the room when this visit occurred. Not wanting to alarm the students, the staff member made a note of it and reported it in his online case log.
Your job is to evaluate these scenarios and prepare potential responses, if any. It’s possible you will get asked about some of these events by reporters or will need to address them head on. You should decide which, if any, scenarios require an immediate response, and how you will respond (social media? Press release? Take internal measures?).

Part Two, Crisis Response & Social Media Team:

As part of your investigation into the bedbugs, you send in a site team to inspect Selleck Hall. The report comes back that 1) there are bedbugs in the room of concern, and 2) that bedbugs have been found in at least three different rooms.

You then interview Steve Yorsenson, Director of University Housing. In your interview, he admits to having received reports of bed bugs in bed lining on campus, but did not report them further. He thought they were isolated incidents and chose to give the students information on how to clean their own rooms and asked them not to spread that information.

Again, in light of the new information, you should decide how to, if at all, respond to this issue. What would you do privately, what would you do publicly?

Audience

You represent the outside world looking in. You are UNL students, staff, parents, Lincoln residents, Nebraska residents, and anyone else who might be watching. You should develop screen names and brief personas for a variety of people (For example, mother of 2 from Lincoln, UNL alumn and loves the school). On the online Google Doc, you should write posts representative of these people that reflect what’s going on during the day. Your goal is to write a large volume of tweets or posts, some relevant, some not, that the other teams need to monitor.

In addition, your job is to read the news page and respond to news posts.

Rules:

1) Always post your newest post at the top of the document
   a. If you are responding to someone, delete the post, paste it to the top of the page, and write your response underneath
2) You should be creative and inventive and aggressive and smart and dumb and everything the “public” can be. HOWEVER
   a. Refrain from personally calling out anyone. If you don’t like the public statement or the reporting or anything else, then describe what is off/shocking/etc in the piece, but don’t blast whoever did it.
b. Refrain from imitating any real people in your tweets. I.E., do not post as celebrities, politicians, or CoJMC professors.

Current day:

It is the move-in day to kick off the 2016-17 school year at the University of Nebraska. So far, things are going pretty smoothly as parents and students come in and get used to the new dorms. You might tweet or post about moving in, leaving parents, starting a new year, etc.

As you write, others (well okay, me) might also tweet about the current days events that you should respond to. There are also these posts about things that happened during the day so far:

ATO111: Big fight during #LemonadeStandforCharity bt ATO and Chi Phi. CP punks think they can roll up on our turf

Wunderboi797: Cut my hands and face punching out some ATO chumps. Biggest fight I’ve ever been in @Chi_Phi_Fraternity #copscalled

Yolo9834: Better wages! Fair Treatment! @UNL #raisestaffwages #protest #UNLunion

Humblewrkr: Wanted to join the #raisestaffwages protest but had no paid time off, so in at work today. #notworthit

Feel free to add to these like you were there, or are responding to them. Make things up if you like.

Audience Part Two:

Continue to respond to anything that comes out by UNL or the reporters. There are also these new tweets:

Husker4lyfe: Weird, just saw a biohazard team walk out of Selleck. Huge gas tanks, shaking their heads.

@RealHumanBean: Thought I would check after hearing about #bedbugs on campus…Time to burn all my things. Thanks @UNL

@OKOKOKOKOK: No no no no no no no no #bedbugs #campuslife #alreadyitchy

Reporters

You represent journalists for the Lincoln Journal Star who are covering the events of the day. First, you should divide yourself up to represent these different outlets:

1) Daily Dish: a gossip magazine focusing on shocking details, gossip, etc.
2) New York Times
3) Lincoln Daily Star
4) (if necessary) local blog poster
Your job is to:

1) Write and post stories and updates to the News Page. You may not have a lot of information, but you should work to write a Headline, Lead and give whatever other details you like. You can interview Me for specific detail questions (e.g., what time did the fight break out?).

2) Write emails to the UNL public relations team. You can write questions or request interviews, but you will need to talk to UNL (and they will talk back)

So far, these notable things are happening:

1) It is the move-in day to kick off the 2016-17 school year at the University of Nebraska. So far, things are going pretty smoothly as parents and students come in and get used to the new dorms.

2) There has been a brawl between two fraternities. Each were out as part of the Greek Move-in Lemonade Stand for Charity Tradition and an incident broke out between two neighboring houses, Alpha Tau Omega and Chi Phi. It didn’t take long for a huge fight to start and the police were called to break up the incident. No one was majorly hurt, but there are certainly scrapes and bruises on both sides. At least 10 different students were involved.

3) There is a protest inside the union. At least 50 people have gotten together, with signs, to protest unfair wages for staff and non-tenured lecturers.

4) You have received an anonymous phone call on the tip hotline that “If you start to dig, you’re going to find a real big coverup going down at UNL. This is a huge story. Ask about the dorms.”

Part Two:

As more of this breaks you get a call from a non-anonymous person, Nathan Myers, who said that he was intimidated and threatened by Steve Yorenson, the Director of University Housing. Myers said that he had reported bedbugs in his dorm room two months ago to Housing, and that Yorenson came to his room, threw some cleaning shampoo at him and told him that if he “ever told anyone about this, then I will kick you out of the university.”
Appendix 7: Fall Peer Review Outline

1. First read through the author’s draft. What’s your initial reaction to it?
2. Summarize what you see as the main point of the author’s work.
3. Now look at the draft more closely. Do you find that the draft has a clear argument (thesis)? If now, what can the author do to strengthen the main point?
4. Does the work stay on topic, or does it wander? What could be done to fix that?
5. Does the work flow in a logical way? What suggestions do you have for improving the organization of the piece?
6. How persuasive was the author? In what way? What could be done better?
7. Does the author connect with the intended audience? What could be done to better tailor to the specific audience?
8. What is the draft’s greatest strength? Greatest weakness?
Appendix 8: End of Semester Reflection Prompt

Reflection:

Finally, you should also write a 3-4 paragraph piece reflecting on your writing in the class and in general. These are some questions you can address, but feel free to head in other directions: What did you find challenging? How do you feel about your ability to write professionally in the workplace? How did you develop this semester? What still needs improvement? What will you take with you for future writing projects?
Appendix 9: Mid-Semester Survey Questions

1. I am enjoying the class so far
2. The amount of work for class is appropriate
3. I feel like I am learning new things in the class
4. The beginning of class period, with lectures/examples, is interesting
5. The activities are interesting
6. I look forward to coming to class
7. I feel like this class is helping prepare me for the workplace
8. I feel like this class will help me in future ADPR classes
9. I feel like I am becoming a better writer
10. I would like to receive more feedback on my writing
11. The feedback I receive is helpful
12. It takes too long to receive feedback on my assignments
13. Please describe the things you enjoy about the class
14. Please describe the things you do not enjoy about the class
15. Please describe the things you would change about the class
16. What would it take to increase your participation in class?

---

\(^{1}\) As last semester’s students were not given consent forms to be part of this project, I have rewritten to paraphrase their comments.