

Department of Communication Studies
Writing Across the Curriculum Plan
For
Public Relations

The Department of Communication Studies has developed a writing plan for each of its four majors (Public Relations, Broadcasting and Mass Communication and Journalism). These plans are designed to insure that students will write frequently throughout their coursework, developing and practicing their skills in written expression, complementing their skills in oral expression and, in doing so, fulfilling the writing components of the current General Education program.

The proposal that follows is a statement of our goals and objectives delineating the ways in which we propose that Public Relations students will meet those goals and an explanation of how the plan fulfills the guidelines published by the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Steering Committee and the spirit of the writing requirements in the General Education Program.

I. GOALS

Along with oral/aural communication, written communication (expression) is central to all the courses in the majors offered by the Communication Studies Department. The goals of writing tasks and writing experiences within our curricula and courses include:

- to enable students to use informal writing tasks such as note taking, personal journal writing and other forms of informal written expression as tools to learn and assimilate course material and to understand writing as a technique of visible thinking, exploring and connecting ideas and, when required, as a means of organizing and enhancing oral expression;
- to develop student's understanding of writing as a process beginning with the stimulus that calls for a written response (the assignment) through stages of development of ideas, researching as necessary, drafting, revising and editing to produce the final piece;
- to develop students' skills and abilities to use writing to communicate ideas, information and understandings clearly to an audience and when required, to support oral expression;
- to give students opportunities to practice various modes of writing characteristic of the professional writing in respective fields of human communication, public relations, broadcasting and journalism;
- to demand students write frequently enough so that they can develop a sense of their own "voices" in writing which may augment or correlate with their various oral styles required for different audiences; to improve students' command over the technical features of writing, including the conventions of Edited American English, MLA, AP and other conventions and forms of

- documentation determined by the requirements of the field of endeavor e.g., public relations, broadcasting, journalism, etc.;
- to advance students' research skills in the disciplines encompassed by the majors offered by the Communication Studies Department;
- to advance students' abilities to integrate the results of their research into their own written expression and as required, their own oral expression.

II. OBJECTIVES

The Department of Communication Studies offers plans for the four majors in the department (Human Communication, Broadcasting, and Mass Communication, Journalism and Public Relations) to meet the writing requirements of General Education. Any courses from these four majors, if they have been designated by the General Education Board as meeting the W-A-C Guidelines, can be used by Public Relations majors. The courses include a writing experience beyond the basic skills course and specifically apply to writing skills in forms characteristic to the Communication/Mass Communication discipline.

In order to meet the Department's requirements including General Education writing requirements for graduation, each student in the Communication Studies Department will take a series of designated BRC, COM, EWA, or JLM courses designed to move one's writing skills from "entry-level" to "polished." Specifically:

- 1) Students must take **one course** from the category designated as **"Introductory."**
- 2) Students must take **two courses** from the category designated as **"Writing to Learn."**
- 3) Students must take **two courses** from the category designated as **"Advanced Level."**
- 4) No more than one course may be taken from the list of approved courses offered by departments other than Communication Studies. Advisor approval is required prior to enrollment in a non-departmental writing course.

"Introductory" writing courses have as their objective the employment of basic elements of writing, i.e., grammar and syntax. Students will have structured writing assignments that call for the practice of composing expository passages and persuasive arguments. Instructors will critique assignments through extensive, formal, feedback and allow re-write opportunities. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via "workshop" and/or "peer review" formats.

Courses emphasizing "Writing to Learn" carry the 200-400 classification and build upon what the student learned in 100-200 level classes. Written assignments (e.g., essays, reaction papers, journals, reports, term papers, etc.) demand of students the use of extensive analytic skills to discover the component parts and organizational structures of information and evidence presented to them in order to identify causes, effects, motives, and consequences or inferences. Written assignments also require that students transfer and apply previously learned knowledge and information in new ways to resolve issues

by developing and articulating innovative theses, arguments and/or solutions. Opportunities are provided for student-teacher conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via a “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses.

“Advanced Level” writing courses carry the 200-400 classification and contain a substantial research element that is overlaid on the skills acquired in the “Introductory” and “Writing to Learn” courses. Students are required to exhibit a sophisticated interpretation and evaluation of complex material, and to display the ability to synthesize existing knowledge by advancing original academic arguments and/or creative projects. Written assignments (e.g., persuasive essays, critical literature reviews, extended research proposals, research-based term papers, reports of original research, etc.) draw upon the existing body of scholarly knowledge and demand significant research skills. Major writing assignments entail at least one rewrite of the first draft. Opportunities are provided for one-on-one teacher-student conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses.

III. Communication Studies Department Writing Plan for Public Relations Majors

A. INTRODUCTORY WRITING COURSES

1. COM 210 Critical Thinking and Public Speaking

B. COURSES EMPHASIZING WRITING TO LEARN

2. COM 215 Introduction to Public Relations
3. COM 313 Writing for Public Relations

C. ADVANCED LEVEL COURSES

4. & 5. Any two courses from the following:
 - BRC 229 Broadcast News Writing
 - BRC 400 Media and Society
 - EWA 209 Intro to Journalism
 - JLM 210 Investigative Reporting
 - JLM 409 News Analysis and Opinion Writing
 - COM 301 Communication Theories
 - COM 302 Message Criticism
 - COM 303 Qualitative Communication Research Methods
 - COM 310 Semantics
 - COM 312 Communication Relationships and Society
 - COM 360 Persuasion
 - COM 370 Rhetoric of Contemporary Movements
 - COM 375 Rhetoric of Film

COM 380 Communication Ethics
COM 415 Advanced Public Relations
COM 420 Studies in Speech Criticism

No more than one course may be taken from the list of approved courses offered by departments other than Communication Studies (i.e., BRC, COM, JLM). Advisor approval is required prior to enrollment in a non-departmental writing course.

D. COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

1. Introductory Writing Courses

COM 210 Critical Thinking and Public Speaking (semester enrollment 25-30/section). Multiple sections offered each semester. The primary goal of this course is to help students develop skills in the artful, well reasoned, ethical and persuasive use of ideas, language, and arguments in public settings. As an "Introductory" writing course, students will engage in written assignments that necessitate the use of basic grammatical and syntactical skills, while exhibiting a command of critical thinking abilities through the use of logic and sound reasoning. Essays, speech critiques, analyses of oral rhetorical events (e.g., political speakers, dramatic performances, television advertisements, etc.) and full sentence outlines with narrative introductions and conclusions, will require the ethical advancement of persuasive claims, supported by evidence in the form of proofs of logic, proofs of credibility, and the judicious use of emotional proofs. Students will organize facts, statistics, testimony, examples, and narratives to develop arguments in support of their theses, while avoiding fallacies of logic (e.g., straw man, bandwagoning, post hoc, ad hominem, etc.) in their reasoning. Instructors will critique assignments through extensive, formal, feedback and allow re-write opportunities. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via "workshop" and/or "peer review" formats. Majors will take this course in the first semester of their sophomore year. Non-majors may take the course to satisfy the General Education Critical Thinking component, or as a cognate for their major.

2. Writing To Learn Courses

COM 215 Survey of Public Relations (semester enrollment 25-30/section). Offered every semester. A theoretical introduction to the general field of public relations. While emphasis is placed on institutional public relations, the operation of corporate public relations offices and private public relations agencies will be introduced. Material will include the origin of public relations, its function, the process and the practice of public relations. Writing assignments include such things as press releases, feature stories, brochure copy, advertising copy, newsletter copy and editorials.

COM 313 Public Relations Writing (enrollment 27 per section/one section per semester). The major goals of this course is to develop writing skills appropriate for

public relations and mass communication in both print and electronic media and therefore includes a substantive writing component. It is an advanced level course which requires students to write, edit copy for print, electronic mass and specialized media. Rewriting of materials is an integral part of the course. Assignments include press releases, feature stories, brochure copy, advertising copy, newsletter copy and editorials.

3. Advanced Level Courses

BRC 229 Broadcast Newswriting (enrollment 27 per section). Offered each semester. Students will gather, write, and edit broadcast news. Differences between local, regional, national, and international news will be examined. Because most entry level broadcast news opportunities require an accurate working command of local news and public affairs, this course shall focus on marketable crafting of such products. Students will be assigned a minimum of ten news story projects. Grading shall include instructor's edit notations so as to encourage students to improve their writing skills on successive class assignments.

BRC 400 Media and Society (enrollment 27 per section). Offered once each year. An investigation of the impact of media systems on society. The course will address economic influences on the media, political controls of the media, media's effect on the individual and on culture; it will consider the intended – and unintended – effects of media messages and issues of access, fairness, and ethics. Prerequisites: Brc 108 and nine hours in the major or permission of the instructor.

EWA 209 Introduction to Journalism (enrollment 22/section). Offered each semester. Course requires extensive writing by students in the genre as well as study of models by professional reporters. Students present drafts for critique and revise them. Student/teacher conferences are required. Term grades are based primarily on written work. Majors usually take this course in the freshman year. Non-majors are welcomed and typically do enroll.

JLM 210 Investigative Reporting (enrollment 22/section). Offered each semester. Course requires extensive research and writing of investigative news stories as well as study of models by professional reporters. Students present draft for critique and revise them. Term grades are based primarily on written work. Majors usually take this course in the sophomore year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites, and a few typically do enroll.

JLM 409 News Analysis and Opinion Writing (enrollment 22/section). Offered once each year. Course requires extensive research and writing of news analysis stories, columns and editorials as well as study of models by professional reporters and writers. Students present draft for critique and revise them. Term grades are based primarily on written work. Majors usually take this course in the junior or senior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites.

COM 301 Communication Theories (semester enrollment 25-30/section). Offered once or twice per year. This “Writing to Learn” course will examine history, recent developments and theories of communication, including an examination of the relationship among theories and their historical and contextual connections. This course also includes an overview of theories on a variety of communication topics designed for the student of human communication. This course is a core requirement of majors in Human Communication. This course will be a small group intensive writing experience emphasizing writing to learn and critical writing in order to fulfill the General Education Writing Across the Curriculum Plan. This course may require a range of writing experiences including a research proposal, a thesis centered research paper applying a selected communication theory to the students’ experience, an oral history, ethnographic research, a critical study or field research. The research project will be carried through the writing process with a focus on the stages of invention, drafting, revising and editing. Students will be asked to complete several informal writing tasks as well as in-class response pieces, out of class reaction papers and keep a writing journal. This course will differ from advanced level writing communication courses in that it will be adapted to the student’s writing needs and skills. Opportunities are provided for student-teacher conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via a “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors will take this course in the second semester of their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year, if a transfer student. Non-majors may take the course, if they have had prerequisites.

COM 302 Message Criticism (enrollment 25-30/section). Offered once per year. This course is one option (the other option is COM312) to fulfill a requirement in the Human Communication major. The course meets the description of a “Writing to Learn” course in that it requires at least two formal essays and examinations that include essay questions. Additional suggested writing options include journals and in-class reaction pieces. Opportunities are provided for student-teacher conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via a “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors usually take this course in the first half of their junior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites.

COM 303 Qualitative Communication Research Methods (enrollment 25-30/section). Offered once per year. The primary goals of this course are to help students acquire an understanding of, practice in, and appreciation for, the ethical process of human communication inquiry through the use of social scientific research methods. Students will develop the ability to question the claims made by others, and to methodologically advance their own claims about communication and the social world. This is an Advanced-Level Writing Course in which students will a) search the literature and write a “mini” review of the existing body of knowledge pertaining to a topic of their choice; b) write up the methods and results of “mini” research projects they conduct; c) write a

comprehensive prospectus that explicates, locates within the existing literature, and justifies an original social scientific or humanistic research project. The prospectus will consist of an abstract, introduction to the problem and hypothesis/research question(s), a comprehensive and evaluative review of the literature, an explanation of proposed study design and methods, and a proposed treatment of the data. Written projects will be presented in oral format to other students for critical evaluation. The major writing assignments entail at least one rewrite of the first draft. Opportunities are provided for one-on-one teacher-student conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors usually take this class in their junior or senior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites.

COM 310 Semantics (enrollment 25 per section/at least one section per semester). Offered irregularly. This course is one of the pairs of courses offered as required selections within the Human Communication Major. It may also serve as an elective for the Broadcasting and Mass Communication Major. Students in Linguistics also enroll in this course as an elective under advisement. Non-majors of junior or senior status frequently take this course since there are no other prerequisites other than junior or senior status. The focus on this course revolves around the concept of levels of meaning of language-signs and symbols and how semantics may affect behavior and perceptions. This course is an advanced, intensive expository writing course and fulfills that requirement. Along with informal in-class writing assignments, students are required to write 2-3 formal essays or short papers and an extensive formal research paper; drafts of which are revised and rewritten. Additionally, students are evaluated upon examinations that require writing essays that are not revised. Major writing assignments entail at least one rewrite of the first draft. Opportunities are provided for one-on-one teacher-student conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors usually take this class in their junior or senior year.

COM 312 Communication Relationships and Communities (enrollment 25-30/section). Offered once per year. This course is one option (the other option is COM302) to fulfill a requirement in the Human Communication major. This course invites students to examine those communication processes which people use to make sense out of their world—the inner world of self, the world of other people, and the world of situations and things. The writing assignment are essay tests, textbook review, and a 15-to-20 page term paper. The course meets the description of a “Writing to Learn” course in that it works from the premise that effective writing is the expression of effective thinking, the students are expected to gain insight into theory and application by concept analysis, creative imagination, metaphorical analysis, and the analysis/synthesis of interacting principles and issues. The student in writing the essay is asked to use persuasive analytic and synthetic skills marked by substance, insight, and creativity to demonstrate a thesis. Their understanding of subject matter will be judged by the unity, coherence, and emphasis of that argument. The student will experience the process

nature of writing and the need for rewriting as they work from the thesis statement through to the final expression of the essay. They will learn the need for precise word usage as they appreciate words as “coaching attitudes.” Students are alerted to communication “noise” created by spelling, grammatical, idiomatic, and stylistic errors. The ultimate goal of the course is to give the student a heightened experience of knowledge-in-action: 1) the assumptions from which they write, 2) the immediate and distance contexts and audiences, and 3) the need to use their imagination in exploring alternate ways of thinking, feeling, experiencing, and living in their learning. Opportunities are provided for student-teacher conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via a “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors usually take this course in the first half of their junior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites.

COM 360 Persuasion (enrollment 25-30/section) Offered once per year. The focus of this course is on the reception and responses made by individuals and groups to persuasive messages. It is designed to serve the needs of students concerned with theories of persuasion as well as the function of persuasion in society. The approach will be eclectic, drawing on the literature and research traditions of rhetoric, communication theory, the social sciences, advertising, and related arts and sciences. An overview of persuasion will be followed by three units which will consider different explanations of these processes: (1) persuasion as a rhetorical phenomenon; (2) persuasion as a psychological/behavioral phenomenon; (3) persuasion and culture. Although there will be an oral presentation made in class, this will be a theory rather than a performance course. Because of the major emphasis on writing, this course fulfills the upper division, general education, expository writing requirements. There will be four graded writing assignments due at appropriate times throughout the semester: (1) one short paper (five pages typed or generated by computer), (2) an essay midterm examination (3) an essay final examination, and (4) the Term paper/Project plus an oral report based on the Term paper/Project. Because the first paper is as much diagnostic of writing ability as it is critical of the student’s experience with the term persuasion, the student will be allowed to rewrite the paper. Thus, the course is concerned with teaching theories and applications of persuasion as well as providing significant writing opportunities. The writing component of this course reflects the philosophy that college students do not learn how to write. Rather, college students learn how to write by learning how to rewrite. As a consequence, the emphasis is on writing as a process rather than writing as a product. Opportunities are provided for one-on-one teacher-student conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors usually take this class in their junior or senior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites.

COM 370 The Rhetoric of Contemporary Movements (enrollment 25-30/section). Offered once per year. This course meets the requirements for an advanced writing

course for the following reasons. First, the students write a significant term paper that analyzes relevant literature within the matrix, language and framework of movement studies. Second, the students have to defend the positions explicated in the term paper. Third, students have ample opportunities to re-write their term papers not just to better their grade but to learn how to edit, revise and rethink their work. Fourth, the term papers are assessed not only in terms of how well they reflect movement studies rhetoric but, also, they are assessed in terms of the writing skills demonstrated in the term paper; specifically, the paper must distinguish primary from secondary sources and be soundly organized, clearly written and persuasively argued. Finally, principles of critical thinking infuse the writing assignments, particularly the ability to weigh and select evidence to support arguments, and the ability to recognize and avoid fallacies of logic, grammar and composition. Opportunities are provided for one-on-one teacher-student conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors usually take this class in their junior or senior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites.

COM 375 Rhetoric of Film (enrollment 25-30/section). Offered irregularly. The primary goals of this course are to help students acquire an understanding of, and appreciation for, film theories, and to develop the ability to employ rhetorical film criticism to question the stories told in film, along with the communicative methods by which these stories are told. Through a series of essays and a research-based term paper, students employ methods of rhetorical film criticism, summarize and extend the existing body of scholarly knowledge regarding film narratives, and produce both “popular” and scholarly film reviews. More specifically, the writing assignments require that students interpret and evaluate films in terms of their “language,” narrative devices, aesthetics elements, structural components, and genres. Rhetorical theories of film are synthesized to develop students’ unique perspectives on film narratives. Major writing assignments entail at least one rewrite of the first draft. Opportunities are provided for one-on-one teacher-student conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors usually take this class in their junior or senior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites.

COM 380 Ethics of Communication (enrollment 25-30/section). Offered once per year. This course invites the student to examine the principles of ethical communication as they apply in a variety of private and public communication contexts. Studying ethics asks the student to develop a mindset focused by knowledge-in-action, which serves as the base for the art of ethical living. Fundamental to all student learning is the premise that effective writing demands effective thinking. The writing assignments are a semester-long journal, a group oral and written presentation of key issues in communication ethics, essay test questions, and a 15-to-20 page paper. The principal cognitive skills required of the student are concept analysis, moral imagination, metaphor analysis, the analysis/synthesis of interacting principles and issues, problem solving, and

decision-making. The student in writing the essay is asked to use persuasive skills marked by substance, insight, and creativity to demonstrate a thesis. Their understanding of subject matter will be judged by the unity, coherence, and emphasis of their argument. Beginning with designing a thesis statement and working through to the final written essay the student will be able to appreciate the process-nature of writing and the need for rewriting. They will learn the need for precise word usage in recognizing that words function to “coach attitudes.” Students are alerted to communication “noise” created by spelling, grammatical, idiomatic, and stylistic errors. The ultimate goal of the course is to give the student a heightened awareness of: 1) the assumptions from which they write, 2) the immediate and distant contexts and audiences, and 3) the need to use their imagination in exploring alternate ways of thinking, feeling, experiencing, and living their learning. Major writing assignments entail at least one rewrite of the first draft. Opportunities are provided for one-on-one teacher-student conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors usually take this class in their junior or senior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites.

COM 415 Advanced Public Relations (enrollment 20/section) Two sections each fall semester. The major course focus is on campaign planning and public relations writing. Revision and rewriting of copy is an integral part of the course. Assignments include writing a campaign proposal, news releases, newsletter copy and media kit materials. It is an advanced level course that focuses on public relations writing skills characteristic to the Public Relations function.

COM 420 Studies in Speech Criticism (enrollment 20/section). This course has been offered irregularly but may be offered once per year. It meets the requirement of a Writing Seminar. Students research, write, and rewrite several short essays in preparation for writing a full-length, professional quality critical essay, which is also revised. Students are encouraged through reading assignments and class discussion to become aware of the writing styles and research techniques of essayists they read. Major writing assignments entail at least one rewrite of the first draft. Opportunities are provided for one-on-one teacher-student conference evaluation of individual written assignments. In some cases, written assignments will be critiqued in class via “workshop” and/or “peer review” formats. Writing activities constitute a major portion of the graded elements in these courses. Majors usually take this class in their senior year. Non-majors are welcomed if they meet the prerequisites.

V. Special Circumstances

- A. Transfer students will be expected to meet all “Writing to Learn” and “Advanced Level” writing requirements in their major within the department.
- B. Double majors will be expected to meet all the writing plan requirements in their first major.

- C. Undeclared majors or students switching to majors within the Communication Studies Department will be expected to take each of the courses in the writing plan for that major – Broadcasting and Mass Communication or Human Communication or Journalism or Public Relations.

v. 2003.02.12