

## **What I Learned This Semester...**

This semester in PR348, I gained valuable insights into the world of public relations strategy and honed essential skills that will benefit my career. The course provided a comprehensive understanding of the key components of PR, offering both theoretical knowledge and practical application. One of the most significant takeaways from this course was understanding the importance of audience-focused communication. Public relations revolves around crafting messages that resonate with specific audiences, and this class emphasized how critical it is to tailor communication to fit the needs and preferences of all different people.

Through various assignments, I learned how to strategically shape messages for different target audiences and communication channels, all while keeping the client's objectives at the forefront. Each assignment challenged me to think critically about the tone, style, and content of my communication, ensuring it would be both effective and impactful. For instance, developing press releases, feature articles, and social media content required me to not only focus on the message but also to ensure it aligned with the broader communication strategy.

One of the skills I honed throughout the semester was writing for public relations. This course provided me with opportunities to create professional PR deliverables, such as press releases, feature articles, blog posts, and even podcast scripts. Each of these assignments offered valuable practice in writing concisely and persuasively. In particular, adhering to Associated Press Style was a key focus throughout the semester. Mastering this standardized style helped me develop the ability to write professionally and accurately, a critical skill for anyone pursuing a career in PR or communications.

Additionally, I explored creative storytelling through the development of social media calendars, graphic content, and short-form captions. These assignments gave me hands-on experience in connecting with audiences across multiple platforms. Understanding how to adapt a message to fit the constraints of different formats—such as a tweet, Instagram post, or long-form blog—was very interesting. Social media is a central component of modern PR, and this course helped me understand how to use it effectively to build engagement and drive awareness.

The press release assignment was one of the most impactful for me because it allowed me to build a foundational skill in public relations that I had limited prior experience with. Crafting a press release required me to focus on presenting key information in a concise, structured, and engaging way. This process taught me the importance of clarity, timeliness, and newsworthiness when communicating with media professionals. By breaking down the structure of a press release into clear sections—headline, lead, body, and boilerplate—I gained a deeper appreciation for how to create an effective and polished document.

Another highlight of the semester was the feature article assignment, which expanded my interviewing skills. Through this assignment, I learned how to ask thoughtful, open-ended questions to uncover meaningful insights. The interviewing process was not only about gathering information but also about creating a comfortable environment where the interviewee felt willing to share their experiences. Synthesizing this information into a compelling narrative was a challenging yet rewarding task. This assignment reinforced the importance of precision and clarity in writing, ensuring every detail contributed to the overall story. It also taught me how to strike the right balance between creativity and professionalism in storytelling.

The social media assignments were another area where I felt I grew significantly. These assignments allowed me to explore my creative side, particularly when designing eye-catching graphics and crafting engaging content. Using Canva to create visually consistent posts and pairing those visuals with well-crafted captions taught me the value of branding and consistency in PR campaigns. I learned how to use language that resonates with specific audiences and how to build posts that are visually appealing and strategically aligned with campaign goals.

This course also gave me a deeper appreciation for the importance of collaboration in public relations. While many of the assignments were completed individually, group activities provided valuable opportunities to exchange ideas, give and receive feedback, and learn from the perspectives of my peers. This collaborative environment mirrored the teamwork often required in real-world PR settings.

Overall, PR348 has been an enriching and transformative experience that has equipped me with practical tools for a successful career in public relations. From developing compelling stories to creating engaging content, this course has deepened my understanding of the field and solidified my confidence in pursuing a role in PR or communications. The hands-on assignments and thoughtful guidance from my professor have given me a clearer sense of my strengths and areas for growth. I am leaving this course with a portfolio of work I am proud of and a stronger understanding of how to apply my skills in professional contexts.

This semester has not only taught me practical skills but also reinforced the importance of adaptability, creativity, and strategic thinking in PR. Whether it was writing a press release, interviewing for a feature article, or creating a social media calendar, each task challenged me to approach problems with a thoughtful and deliberate mindset. As I look forward to future opportunities in the field, I feel well-prepared to tackle the challenges of a dynamic and fast-paced industry.