Introduction for Faculty Colleagues

This course – taught in the School of Communications and designed for strategic communications majors – is an upper-level writing course required for majors. It emphasizes the importance of writing in public relations, advertising and media relations. The following assignment touches on four of the course’s learning objectives:

1. Develop effective strategies for planning and developing clear and accurate written documents such as backgrounders, news releases, media advisories, fact sheets, news conferences, and oral presentations.

2. Apply professional writing standards for truth, accuracy, fairness and understanding.

3. Use research and critical evaluation skills applicable to persuasive writing and presentations, including preparation, strategies, supporting materials, and/or use of audio/visual technologies.

4. Demonstrate writing and presentation techniques that pertain to diverse and targeted audiences, media, and messages.

Aim
This assignment was created to help students develop the writing skills required to deliver an effective pitch/presentation. The assignment steps allow for students to be graded on group writing as well as individual writing. It simulates a client situation and group collaboration—as it would happen in the “real world.”

Learning Outcome
To analyze brand values and the potential needs of a client as well as a target audience in order to craft social media messages.

Important Features
Students in this course generally work individually with a variety of real clients both from the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. This assignment groups students based on industry area if possible. Groups allow students to choose to work with the one client that will interest them most or presents the most interesting opportunity. This
assignment is a modification of a former assignment. Changes include turning in assignments along the way, which will build to the final assignment.

**Instruction and Support**
Students have access to all course materials, and time in class is used for discussion of the results of each stage of the process.

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**The Assignment I Distribute to Students**

**COM 312 – Strategic Writing**

**Group Pitch/Presentation**

**Designed to Support COM 312 Course Objectives #1, 2, 3 and 4**
- Develop effective strategies for planning and developing clear and accurate written documents.
- Apply professional writing standards for truth, accuracy, fairness and understanding.
- Use research and critical thinking skills.
- Demonstrate writing techniques for diverse and targeted audiences, media, and messages.

Your final deliverable for this project is a brief oral pitch/presentation in class – up to 10 minutes – with accompanying written materials. Three other smaller assignments are submitted along the way so that you can be best prepared for your final deliverable.

**Learning Outcomes**
- To analyze brand values and the potential needs of a client as well as a target audience in order to effectively pitch an idea.
- To use writing effectively throughout the process of strategic planning and product delivery.

**Options**
You have two options for project.

**Option 1**
You are pitching (or “selling”) any persuasive idea on behalf of one of your clients. You may invent a fake or potential scenario, but try to pose a realistic issue. This option is beneficial if you are interested in working in sales, marketing, public relations or nonprofit management.
This option requires that you define a clear target audience and a very specific purpose.

This should not be a generic presentation about your client’s mission/vision/services.

Be creative! Some examples:

- Your nonprofit client needs to recruit volunteers or intern applicants at Elon University. You might be speaking in a class or at a student group meeting.

- Your client needs to pitch to a potential business partner or corporate donor. You might be meeting with a group of executives to convince them to invest in a partnership.

- Your client is the featured speaker at an industry trade show or conference. You highlight the benefits of your latest product/service and position the client as an industry leader.

- Your client needs to persuade a specific audience to vote in your community, advocate for policy changes, etc. For example, if your organization communicates about health issues, you might pitch a particular position on a current topic.

**Option 2**

You are the branding or communications firm trying to land one of your clients as your next account. You are set to pitch a new brand identity. This option is beneficial if you desire to work in an agency setting or feel the client could use a new brand or communications strategy.

- This option requires extensive research that leads to a new proposal of brand identity.

- This pitch requires a brief review of current brand identity, desired brand identity based on research and the proposed identity you have created.

- You will want to refer to specific brand values and present the look and feel of the new brand identity. You might include a logo, tagline, and potential communication options for disseminating the new identity.

- It is helpful to connect your brand identity to some sort of model or theory, which supports your rationale. An example is the Destiny-Distinction-Culture-Experience model.

**Instructions**

Due dates and the descriptions below are posted on Moodle and included in the syllabus. For either option, you will submit a series of assignments:
Assignment #1

As a group, consider some potential case scenarios. This assignment is designed to assist you with the initial brainstorming process and help you select ideas that are potential of benefit to your client and audience. First, identify potential target audience(s) and potential desired action(s). Go through the process of brainstorming some initial strategy—you may handwrite or type your brainstorm. Submit 2-3 potential project ideas that each clearly connect to the A-I-D-A model. You may submit a photograph of your handwritten brainstorm or a typed response. Your group members all receive the same grade. This will be graded as a homework assignment with the following scale:

5=creative ideas and evidence of understanding the A-I-D-A model
4=clear/thorough/thoughtful
3=less compelling or late
2=unclear/incomplete
1=deficient
0=not submitted

Assignment #2

As a group, write and edit a creative brief for the client. A creative brief is a very standard written document used in the industry when working with a new client. Focus on structure, clarity and precision in your writing. Keep it simple and direct, using what you have learned thus far about branding and positioning. You may use the template provided in class. This assignment will help you practice writing a clear creative brief—often distributed internally before planning and pitching an idea. Writing will be graded for strategy and technique using the standard rubric. Group members all receive the same grade. The following link should help you with the creative brief: http://www.slideshare.net/ewarwoowar/creative-brief-workshop

Assignment #3

Individually, write the opening and closing paragraphs of your oral pitch/presentation using the templates and readings about public speaking on Moodle as guides. This assignment is designed to help you select the best strategic approach for the presentation your group will give. In between the opening and closing paragraphs briefly outline the primary points you believe will demonstrate the strategy and thinking behind the content of your pitch/presentation. You may have a very different approach than the members of your group. Writing will be graded for strategy and technique using the standard rubric. You receive an individual grade for this assignment.
Final Deliverable (Pitch/Presentation and Written Materials)

As a group, come to class and pitch your idea! Be prepared to set the scene for us. If your audience is not strategic communications majors in a writing class and a professor, then you MUST tell us who we are and explain where we are. Not all members of your group need to be a part of the presentation—you should replicate what would happen in the actual setting. You are required to use written materials that accompany your pitch/presentation. Materials must be realistic for your pitch setting and may include PowerPoint presentations, fact sheets, brief reports, fliers, etc. Remember that you should not use your creative brief as a handout for your audience, and you do not want to overwhelm your audience with too many written documents. Your technique grade is based on any written content you use during the presentation. Your strategy grade is based on the oral pitch/presentation itself. Your classmates as well as myself will grade your strategy. Group members all receive the same grade.
## Strategic Writing Grading Rubric

### Strategy

**Expertise: Evidence of Research/Knowledge**

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**Benefit: Potential to WOW Client/Creativity**

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**Content: Logical and Appropriate**

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**Connection: Potential to Influence Audience**

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### Technique

**Precision: Grammar, Punctuation and Sentence Structure**

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**Precision: AP Style (if applicable) and Spelling**

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### Accuracy: Facts (Major Errors and Detail Errors)

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### Logic: Sequencing, Word Choice, Transitions and Flow

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**Grade:** (Strategy: + Technique: )/2 = **Final:**