

Syllabus | PUBA 721: Professional Communications

COURSE PURPOSE

You will leave the course better prepared to read, listen, and think critically; write and speak clearly, concisely, and unambiguously; give organized and convincing oral presentations; and use appropriate tools and tone in preparing oral and written communications for diverse audiences. As public service leaders, you will be asked to deliver accurate information to the appropriate audience in the appropriate format in a timely manner; this course will provide you tools to do this.

GROUND RULES

This is a graduate-level course that demands students be carefully prepared. Furthermore, this course is presented within the context of a professional degree program and will be conducted according to the standards of the professional workplace. Class members should consider themselves colleagues who will collaborate to help each other develop a solid understanding of materials and concepts. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. For further information about academic misconduct and its consequences, see the [UNC Code of Student Conduct](#).

This course offers an opportunity to improve your communication skills in a safe environment—an environment in which a pay increase or your continued employment is not on the line. Everyone has something important to communicate, and this course will give you tools to help you communicate your thoughts and ideas. Please respect one another as you work to hone and practice your communication styles. Pay attention to and learn from your colleagues, as they will be some of your best teachers.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is designed to prepare you for the workplace. As such, each student will

- Come to class and arrive on time. If you are going to miss a class, notify the instructor by email prior to class, not after the fact.
- Read electronic communications and wall posts. The instructor will provide assignment clarifications or modifications (if necessary) by posting to the course wall.
- Meet deadlines. Late work will be penalized .5 of a point per 24-hour period, or fraction thereof.
- Approach every assignment as if it will be distributed to your employer—the person who decides whether or not you'll receive a pay increase.
- Spend at least as much time editing as you do writing.
- Adhere to the length limits of written assignments. Writing concisely for target audiences is a challenge that each of you will face in your careers.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Textbook Requirements

The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition

(online version free through UNC Library:

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/home.html>)

Evergreen, Stephanie. *Presenting Data Effectively: Communicating Your Findings for Maximum Impact*. 2nd edition. (Los Angeles, California: Sage, 2018).

Software Requirements

Microsoft Office

Additional Text for Reference (Not Required)

Those looking for a short text that will help with basic grammar and writing rules may want to purchase this additional text for reference. The book is not required for the course.

Blake, Gary, and Robert Bly. *The Elements of Business Writing: A Guide to Writing Clear, Concise Letters, Memos, Reports, Proposals, and Other Business Documents* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Macmillan, 1992).

ASSIGNMENTS

Late work will be penalized .5 of a point per 24-hour period or fraction thereof. Unless otherwise stated, all written assignments are single spaced, 11-point font with one-inch margins. All writing should follow Chicago style, as outlined in course text *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition.

Style Guide	2.5%
Staff Meeting Presentation and Memo	2.5%
Project Update Memo	10%
Board Memo	15%
Board PowerPoint Presentation	10%
Request Memo	15%
Resume and Cover Letter	10%
Request Presentation	15%
Asynchronous Class Participation	10%
Live Session Class Participation	10%

WEEK 1

COMMUNICATION BASICS: LEADERSHIP AND GRAMMAR

- Manjoo, Farhad. "[Space Invaders.](#)" Slate.com, January 12, 2011.
- Shellenbarger, Sue. "[This Embarrasses You and I.](#)" WSJ.com, June 19, 2012.

Note: In addition to the required readings listed above, the asynchronous section of this week includes two articles ("What Makes a Great Leader" and "Communications Secrets of Great Leaders") that you will read and then provide your thoughts on. Please allocate sufficient time to read the articles and respond to the questions that follow the articles.

ADDITIONAL READING (NOT REQUIRED) FOR GRAMMAR/SYNTAX GUIDANCE

- Blake, Gary, and Robert Bly. *The Elements of Business Writing: A Guide to Writing Clear, Concise Letters, Memos, Reports, Proposals, and Other Business Documents* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Macmillan, 1992), 93–123.

WEEK 2

STYLE

- AP vs. Chicago blog post. "[Titles: Quote Marks, Italics, Underlining, or Naked?](#)"
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. (have available for asynchronous activities and live session)

Assignment Due – Draft a Style Guide

Draft a style guide for a public service organization (e.g., a local government, a nonprofit, or a state or federal government agency) of your choice. The style sheet should not be longer than three pages, but it can be as short as one page, as long as it addresses key style elements that will help employees draft professional communications that are uniform in style and formatting.

Bring a draft to the week 2 live session. Final draft submitted 24 hours after week 2 live session. The style guide will be graded as complete or incomplete; 2.5 points for complete and zero points for incomplete.

WEEK 3 CLEAR, CONCISE COMMUNICATION

Note: The asynchronous section of this week includes one article (“The Needless Complexity of Academic Writing”) that you will read and then provide your thoughts on. Please allocate sufficient time to read the article and respond to the question that follows it.

ADDITIONAL READING (NOT REQUIRED) FOR GRAMMAR/SYNTAX GUIDANCE

- Blake, Gary, and Robert Bly. *The Elements of Business Writing: A Guide to Writing Clear, Concise Letters, Memos, Reports, Proposals, and Other Business Documents* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Macmillan, 1992), 1–16 and 35–54.

WEEK 4 ORGANIZING AND EDITING

- Evergreen, Stephanie. *Presenting Data Effectively: Communicating your Findings for Maximum Impact, 2nd ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018). Pages 1-17.

Note: In addition to the required reading listed above, this week includes several asynchronous activities that require “reworking” communications and submitting file uploads. Please allocate sufficient time to complete these activities, which should take about 20 minutes each.

ADDITIONAL READING (NOT REQUIRED) FOR GRAMMAR/SYNTAX GUIDANCE

- Blake, Gary, and Robert Bly. *The Elements of Business Writing: A Guide to Writing Clear, Concise Letters, Memos, Reports, Proposals, and Other Business Documents* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Macmillan, 1992), 17–34 and 125–131.

WEEK 5 WRITING TO INFORM: MEMOS

- Evergreen, Stephanie. *Presenting Data Effectively: Communicating Your Findings for Maximum Impact, 2nd ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018). 18–31 and 77–118.

Note: In addition to the required reading listed above, this week include several asynchronous activities that require “reworking” communications and submitting file uploads. Please allocate sufficient time to complete these activities, which should take about 20 minutes each.

Major Assignment Due – Memo One: Provide a project update to your supervisor

Drawing from any past experience, draft a two-page memo (1” margins, size 11 font) updating your supervisor on the status of a project that you have been overseeing for the past six months. This project could be fictitious or one that you oversaw in a previous job or volunteer experience. At a minimum, the memo should address

- Project outcomes during your six-month tenure as project director
- Challenges the project has faced during your tenure
- The three goals you hope the project will achieve in the next six months

Bring a near-final draft to the week 5 live session.

You will work in small groups to peer review memos. Your instructor will provide directions for sharing your draft memo with your group. After receiving feedback in the live session, you will have 24 hours to revise your memo and submit a final version (due 24 hours after week 5 live session). The revised and final memo will be graded on a scale of 10.

WEEK 6

SPEAKING TO INFORM

Note: There are no required readings this week; there are three readings linked in the asynchronous work:

- “10 Tips for Improve Your Public Speaking Skills”
- “12 Tips for Public Speaking”
- “The 6 Presenter Types: Which One Are You?”

This week includes a set of asynchronous activities that involve you first recording a two-minute video and then responding to your classmates’ videos, as described in the major assignment below. Please complete the video early in the week, allowing sufficient time for your peers to review your video and provide feedback. You also have an activity that involves finding an example of a speaker who exemplifies good public speaking; plan accordingly as you prepare to work on this week’s asynchronous materials.

Assignment Due – Presentation One: Staff Meeting Update

You submitted your project update memo to your supervisor, and she has asked you to make a brief presentation on your project at your upcoming staff meeting. Develop a **two-minute** presentation that addresses the key items discussed in your project update memo. You distributed the project update memo to your coworkers prior to your presentation, but you cannot be certain that they have all read the material in advance. The presentation is an informal one that you would give at a regularly scheduled staff meeting. Record your presentation at least 48 hours before the week 6 live session.

Once your recording is posted, watch your staff meeting update video once, noting what you liked and what you'd like to improve. Then, watch the video again and mute the volume. This time, pay attention to your movements and note which movements or gestures were effective and which were distracting. Summarize your observations in a one-page memo. The memo should include three things you like about your presentation delivery and three improvements you'd like to make in your presentation delivery.

Upload the memo and the link to your presentation recording onto 2SG before the week 6 live session.

The instructor will provide written feedback on your recorded presentation. The presentation and one-page memo will be graded as either complete or incomplete; 2.5 points for complete and zero points for incomplete. You need to put your recorded video on your portfolio in 2SG to access it in the assignment for submission. See below.

WEEK 7

USING VISUALS TO INFORM

- Evergreen, Stephanie. *Presenting Data Effectively: Communicating Your Findings for Maximum Impact*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018). 32–74 and 121–195.

Note: In addition to the required reading listed above, this week includes three activities that will take approximately 15 minutes each: you will find an example of a good visual, practice making a chart in Excel, and practice using a non-Excel data visualization tool. Please allocate sufficient time to complete these activities.

ADDITIONAL READING (NOT REQUIRED) FOR GRAMMAR/SYNTAX GUIDANCE

- Blake, Gary, and Robert Bly. *The Elements of Business Writing: A Guide to Writing Clear, Concise Letters, Memos, Reports, Proposals, and Other Business Documents*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Macmillan, 1992) 55–73.

Major Assignment Due – Memo Two: Update Your Board

Your supervisor was so impressed with your project update memo that he has asked you to modify your memo for distribution to the board (e.g., city council, board of county commissioners, or board of directors). Your

board is notoriously busy and you know they will not read a two-page, text-heavy document; you need to create a one-page memo with a visual. Using best practices in visual communication outlined in the lecture and your classmates' examples of strong visual communications as a guide, add a visual to your original project update memo while reducing the overall page length.

- Edit your two-page project update memo so that it is appropriate for a different audience. (Your board of directors may expect more formal language or they may be less familiar with your program.)
- Choose an important concept or message to convey using a visual and replace text with that visual. You can create the visual using design tools in Word or other computer program, or you can draw the visual, take a picture of it, and insert the .jpg image into the memo.

Your final product should be no longer than one page (1" margins, size 11 font). Bring a near-final draft to the week 7 live session.

You will work in small groups to peer review memos. After receiving feedback in the live session, you will have 24 hours to revise your memo and submit a final version (due 24 hours after week 7 live session). The revised memo will be graded on a scale of 15.

WEEK 8 **USING POWERPOINT WISELY**

Note: There are no required readings this week. There are two readings linked in the asynchronous content ("Atomic Slide Development" and "Lessons from a 4th Grader's PowerPoint").

This week involves becoming familiar with specific tools within PowerPoint and then submitting sample slides to demonstrate your ability to use these tools. Please allocate sufficient time to complete the slide submissions.

Major Assignment Due – Presentation Two: Board PowerPoint Presentation

Your supervisor has asked you to prepare a five-minute PowerPoint presentation on one of the following three topics:

1. The project you have been overseeing for the past six months (i.e., the project you've been discussing in assignments to date)
2. A new project
3. A policy report (you can choose an existing policy report or white paper that has been developed by a nonprofit or government agency)

Project update presentations should address history, outcomes, challenges, and next steps. Policy presentations should address the background, findings, and recommendations. Your audience for this presentation is a group of people familiar with the general content of your work, but not familiar with the intricate details of the project or study.

Carefully go through the asynchronous material on the technical aspects of creating PowerPoint presentations, following prompts to submit sample slides that demonstrate your skills. Drawing on the tutorials and readings from the asynchronous material, develop a five-minute PowerPoint presentation that helps you convey key messages from your verbal presentation.

The presentation is graded on a scale of 10. You will receive two points for submitting all required work products/slide samples in the asynchronous section. The remaining eight points will be allocated using a rubric when you give your presentation. Your instructor will give you directions for delivering your presentation. Your classmates will also provide feedback on your presentation.

WEEK 9**WRITING TO PERSUADE**

Note: There are no required readings this week; this week includes two asynchronous activities that will take between 15 and 20 minutes each. One of these activities (Email Etiquette) involves partner work. Please find a partner early in the week and ensure you have sufficient time to complete both activities.

ADDITIONAL READING (NOT REQUIRED) FOR GRAMMAR/SYNTAX GUIDANCE

- Blake, Gary, and Robert Bly. *The Elements of Business Writing: A Guide to Writing Clear, Concise Letters, Memos, Reports, Proposals, and Other Business Documents* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Macmillan, 1992), 75–92.

Major Assignment Due – Memo Three: Persuasive Memo

You have two pages to convince your supervisor of something (e.g., that your project needs more resources, that your solution to the policy problem is the best course of action). Draft a memo that describes the need/problem, the way you propose the problem be addressed, and the resources you need to do this. Feel free to employ any of the communication tools discussed in class to date.

Bring a near-final draft to the week 9 live session.

You will work in small groups to peer-review memos. After receiving feedback in the live session, you will have 24 hours to revise your memo and submit a final version (due 24 hours after week 9 live session). The revised memo will be graded on a scale of 15.

WEEK 10**WRITING TO GET THE JOB**

- Bryant, Adam. "[Lori Senecal on Coaching When the Bar Is High.](#)" *New York Times*. May 23, 2015.

Note: In addition to the required reading listed above, this week includes a reading in the asynchronous content ("Hey, Students: 5 Things That Are Wrong With Your Cover Letter").

Major Assignment Due – Resume and Cover Letter

Using the job posting you selected at the beginning of the asynchronous section and taking what you learned from the resume and cover letter workshop, compose a resume (no longer than two pages) and cover letter (no longer than one page) that responds to the job posting you have selected.

Bring your resume and cover letter to the week 10 live session.

You will receive informal feedback from your classmates in a "Who Would You Hire?" activity in the week 10 live session. You have 24 hours after the week 10 live session to submit a final resume and cover letter. The resume and cover letter will be graded on a combined scale of 10.

WEEK 11**SPEAKING TO PERSUADE**

- Bale, Tim. "[For His Speech, David Cameron Will Surely Lean on Ethos, Pathos and Logos.](#)" *The Guardian*. October 2, 2013.
- Markman, Art. "[Your Employees' Emotions Are Clues to What Motivates Them.](#)" *Texas Enterprise*. May 28, 2015.

Note: In addition to the required readings listed above, this week includes readings linked in the asynchronous content (“A Well-Crafted ‘Elevator Speech’ Can Sell a Mission Succinctly” and “Why Your ‘Elevator Pitch’ is a Bad Idea”).

This week also includes an activity in which you will create an elevator speech. The activity should take 15 minutes; please allocate sufficient time to develop and record your speech.

Major Assignment Due – Presentation Three: Making a Request

Your supervisor agrees with your request; the next step is to ask your board. Prepare a five-minute persuasive presentation for your governing board. Your only visual requirement for this assignment is that you cannot use PowerPoint in its traditional form. You can, however, use other tools that help you deliver your message.

You will give your presentation during the week 11 live session. The instructor will use a rubric to grade your presentation on a scale of 15. Your classmates will also provide feedback on your presentation.

WEEK 12 REACHING YOUR AUDIENCE THROUGH THE MEDIA

Note: There are no required readings this week, and there are readings linked with the asynchronous content (“7 Examples of Successful Press Release Boiler Plates” and “Message Discipline Matters!”).

This week includes a 25-minute asynchronous activity in which you will develop and submit a news release; please allocate sufficient time to complete this activity.

WEEK 13 REACHING YOUR AUDIENCE DIRECTLY

- ICMA. “[Know What to Say and Do in a Crisis.](#)” October 16, 2014.

In addition to the required reading listed above, this week includes a 20-minute asynchronous activity in which you share and reflect upon an opinion piece. Please allocate sufficient time for this activity.

ASSIGNMENT GRID

The grid below outlines the assignments due in PUBA 721 week by week. In addition to what is listed below, there are activities throughout the asynchronous materials that need to be completed each week.

Week	Topic	Assignments	Submission	Deadline	Percent of Grade
1	Communication Basics: Leadership and Grammar	No assignments; see asynchronous activities			
2	Style	Draft a Style Guide	Submit via assignment submission page	Bring Style Guide to week 2 live session; final draft due 24 hours after week 2 live session	2.5
3	Clear, Concise Communication	No assignments; see asynchronous			

		activities			
4	Organizing and Editing	No assignments; see asynchronous activities			
5	Writing to Inform: Memos	Memo #1: Project Update	Submit FINAL memo via assignment submission page after peer editing is integrated	Bring near final draft to week 5 live session; final draft due 24 hours after week 5 live session	10
6	Speaking to Inform	Presentation #1: Staff Meeting Update & Memo	Post recording to asynchronous course page Submit memo to assignment submission page	Recording due 48 hours before week 6 live session Memo due before week 6 live session	2.5
7	Using Visuals to Inform	Memo #2: Update your Board	Submit FINAL memo via assignment submission page after peer editing is integrated	Bring near final draft to week 7 live session Final draft due 24 hours after week 7 live session	15
8	Using PowerPoint Wisely	Presentation #2: Board PowerPoint Presentation	Submit required work products as prompted in asynchronous work Final PowerPoint is not submitted	Have your PowerPoint ready to share as you give your five-minute presentation in the live session	10 2 points-asynchronous submissions 8 points-presentation
9	Writing to Persuade	Memo #3: Persuasive Memo	Submit FINAL memo via assignment submission page after peer editing is integrated	Bring near final draft to week 9 live session Final draft due 24 hours after week 9 live session	15
10	Writing to Get the Job	Resume and Cover Letter	Submit FINAL resume and cover letter via assignment submission page after peer feedback is integrated	Bring near final drafts to week 10 live session Final drafts due 24 hours after week 10 live session	10

11	Speaking to Persuade	Presentation #3: Making a Request	No submission; simply present in the live session	Present in the week 11 live session	15
12	Reaching Your Audience Through the Media	No assignments; see asynchronous activities			
13	Reaching Your Audience Directly	No assignments; see asynchronous activities			