

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 383 (L01): Introduction to Public Relations

FALL 2021 Sept. 7 to Dec. 9 (excluding Sept. 30, Oct. 11, Nov. 7-13)

Tuesday classes will be delivered in-person on campus (09:30 – 10:45)

Classroom etiquette will follow U of C campus safety protocols for COVID-19.

Thursday classes will be asynchronous.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR ONLINE COURSE DELIVERY

Asynchronous & Synchronous Course Components: Please read this outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate in person or online at the registrar scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time). Synchronous sessions hosted on Zoom can be accessed on D2L by clicking on the Communications tab and selecting Zoom.

Online Quizzes and Exams: You will be allowed a minimum window of 24-hours to access online quizzes and exams, but there may be a time limit for completing a quiz once you open it. Read the description carefully. Time specified for online assessments includes 50% extra time.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR IN-PERSON COURSE DELIVERY

Note: This course will be delivered in-person, on-campus on Tuesdays. If you are unable to participate on campus in-class or in any online sessions due to time differences or geographical location, please arrange to take this course in a future term. Masks are mandatory in the classroom and must be worn at all times during class (i.e., covering mouth and nose). Failure to comply with this policy will result in dismissal from the classroom and possible disciplinary action under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Instructor	Dr. Monique Solomon
Email	solomonm@ucalgary.ca
Web Page	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office	SS 254
Office Hours	T 11-12 in office, R 11-12 via Zoom, and by appointment

Course Description

In this introductory course students will learn fundamental principles and practices of Public Relations (PR). The course covers history, ethics, theory and research in PR. Students will examine the successes and challenges of historic and contemporary PR case examples in business, government, and cause-related organizations. Weekly topics include strategic planning, research and evaluation in PR programs, writing for PR, media relations, crisis and issues management, and PR specializations.

Additional Information

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline. In this class, students are introduced to course material through lectures and discussion, readings, and in-class activities. Students practice writing for PR by preparing materials relevant to professionals in the field. The course emphasizes learning

through participation, which means attendance and attention during class time are essential for success in the course. The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found on D2L.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- understand of the principles and practices of public relations
- think critically about relationships between organizations, stakeholders, and publics
- discuss the relevance of public relations cases in class, group, and individual work
- apply best practices and ethical approaches in preparation of foundational public relations and communications materials.

Textbooks and Readings

Page, J. T., and Parnell, L. J. (2021). Introduction to Public Relations: Strategic, Digital, Socially Responsible Communication, Second Edition. Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA.

Students may use the First Edition but should note that some material will vary from the Second Edition. Students may use the print or e-textbook.

Email Policy

- Include **COMS 383** in the subject line of all email sent to your professor. Include your name in the body of the email *as it appears* in your university registration.
- **Email will usually be answered M-F between 11am – 6pm.** You can generally expect an answer within 48 hours. Email will not be answered on weekends.
- **Email is best used for short specific inquiries.** If you have detailed questions about the course material or assignments make an appointment during office hours.
- Regularly check your @ucalgary.ca email. Ensure email is not in spam or junk folders.
- Email sent to your professor and fellow students must be courteous and professional.

Learning Technologies and Requirements & Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

For online or blended courses, students are required to have reliable access to the following:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.
- Technical difficulties? Visit: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Policy on the use of Electronic Communication Devices

Laptops, tablets, and mobile phones may be used in class and tutorials only for course-related purposes and only if their use is not distracting others or negatively impacting the learning environment. Close all electronics during presentations by your fellow students. Working on a laptop or device during student presentations may impact your participation grade. NO audio or video recording or photographing of course materials is allowed in any class without the instructor's permission. Please familiarize yourself with the University's policy on the recording of lectures (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>), and carefully review the section on Instructor Intellectual Copyright in this outline.

Instructor Intellectual Copyright

All course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without explicit consent of the instructor. Posting course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites is prohibited. Sharing extracts of course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have questions about sharing materials with classmates. *Students are not permitted to audio or video-record lectures and discussions or take pictures/screen shots during this class. All statements and interactions during class time are a matter of group privacy and cannot be publicized.*

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students using material protected by copyright in violation of the policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Assignments and Evaluation

All assignments will be discussed in class and detailed instructions posted on D2L.

Quizzes (35%) (Individual)

September 16, 23, October 1, 7, 14, 28, November, 4, 18, 25, December 2

The quizzes are intended to encourage and evaluate student review of weekly readings and engagement in class. Each quiz will include 20-multiple choice questions and 1-2 short answer questions. Students will have 2-hours to complete each quiz. The time to complete a quiz includes 50% extra time in case of technical difficulty. Each quiz will be open for 48-hours. Quizzes are open book and material covers weekly chapter reading and class lecture material. Contingency plan: Students are encouraged to complete each quiz during the designated dates. In case of a missed quiz the student must contact the professor as soon as possible to indicate why the test was missed and to reschedule. Classes are asynchronous on Thursday (quiz) days giving students time to prepare and complete the quiz. I will closely monitor email 10-11:30am on Thursdays.

Media Kit (30%) (Individual) Due: October 21 (11:59 pm)

Students prepare five one-page assigned PR materials that comprise a basic media kit. Time will be allotted in class to discuss the materials. A final version of each document will be submitted together as a Media Kit.

Communications Plan (30%) (Individual) Due: December 9 (11:59 pm) Students prepare a Communications Plan for an assigned case study organization (2200-2400 words).

Participation (5%) (Individual). Ongoing throughout term. Participation will be evaluated based on contributions during class discussions and involvement during in-class activities. Please arrive on time. Disrupting class using laptops/devices in a distracting manner will reduce participation grade. Please be respectful of, and practice COVID-19 safety protocols as set out by the University during classes.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Submission of Assignments

Students must complete all assignments or a course grade of 'F' may be assigned at the discretion of the professor. Contact the professor asap if you miss a component.

Follow all assignment instructions carefully. All assignments are due via upload to D2L (.doc, .docx, or .pdf) on the due date stated on the assignment, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. Include your name and ID number on all assignments AND include your surname in the file name of assignments you upload to D2L. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the correct version. Do not email your assignments unless directed to by your professor.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after due dates may be penalized with the loss of a partial letter grade for each day late (e.g.: A- to B+ to B).

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter

grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade. In this course, letter grades will be used for the media kit and communications plan, whereas numeric points will be converted to percentage for participation and quizzes.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including non-traditional formats, i.e. Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.

Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using).

Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For this course use APA style formatting. For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

The weekly schedule of topics, readings and detailed assignment instructions will be available on D2L.