

University of Calgary

Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 383 (L01) Introduction to Public Relations

SPRING 2021 May 5 – June 17 (excluding May 24)

Classes will be synchronous Mondays and Wednesdays (13:00-15:45)
and include lecture, discussion, and activities for all or part of class time.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR SPRING 2021

This Spring 2021 course will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Read the outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (live class time via Zoom) and which components will be offered asynchronously (materials completed independently). Access Zoom via D2L course site, click COMMUNICATION, select Zoom 5-10 minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

Note: Time indicated on course outlines for all timed quizzes and exams in CMCL, COMS, and FILM courses includes 50% extra time to allow for technical difficulties.

Instructor: Dr. Monique Solomon
Email: solomonm@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours: By appointment (email or zoom)

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 stated in this outline. In this course, students are introduced to material through online lectures and discussions, readings, and in-class activities. Attendance and attention during synchronous class time are essential for success in the course.

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. (2019). Introduction to Strategic Public Relations: Digital, Global, and Socially Responsible Communication. Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA. (The digital textbook is available from Vital Source).

Email Policy

- **Email sent to your professor must include COMS 383 in the subject line.**
Email will be answered M-F (10–6). 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 course material or assignments, please make an appointment to meet on Zoom.
- **Email should include your name as it appears in your university registration.**
Please ensure you have access to and regularly check your @ucalgary.ca address.
- Emails to your professor and your fellow students must be respectful and courteous.

Technology Requirements & Policy for Use of Electronic Communication Devices

In order to complete online (or blended) courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, most recent security and malware updates, and 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.
- For assistance with technical difficulties contact UC IT
<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Instructor Intellectual Copyright

Instructors may arrange to record synchronous zoom class sessions for lesson capture; however, students are NOT to share recordings with others. All course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations, 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 class. All statements and interactions during class time are a matter of group privacy and cannot be publicized.*

Assignments and Evaluation	Weight	Due
Assignments will be discussed in class and instructions posted on D2L.		

<p>Midterm Test - The test will include 45-50 multiple-choice questions. Students will have 2-hours to complete the test. The time to complete the test includes 50% extra time in case of technical difficulty. The test will be open for 24-hours. The test will be open book. The test material will cover chapter readings and class lecture material (May 5 – 19). Contingency plan: Given the short duration of the term students are encouraged to complete the test on the designated date; however, in the case of a missed test a student must contact the professor as soon as possible to indicate why the test was missed and to reschedule. On the day of the test the class will be asynchronous. If you have a question about the test I will be monitoring email between 1 pm and 3 pm.</p>	20%	May 26
<p>Media Kit - Students (individually) prepare five one-page assigned PR materials that comprise a basic media kit. A final version of each one-page document will be submitted together as a Media Kit.</p>	25%	June 2
<p>Final Test - The test will include 45-50 multiple-choice questions. Students will have 2-hours to complete the test. The time to complete the test includes 50% extra time in case of technical difficulty. The test will be open for 24-hours. The test will be open book. The test material will cover chapters readings and class lecture material (May 31 – June 9). Contingency plan: Given the short duration of the term students are encouraged to complete the test on the designated date; however, in the case of a missed test a student must contact the professor as soon as possible to indicate why the test was missed and to reschedule. On the day of the test the class will be asynchronous. If you have a question about the test I will be monitoring email between 1 pm and 3 pm.</p>	15%	June 14
<p>Communications Plan - Students prepare a Communications Plan for an assigned case study organization (2000-2200 words). Students may work individually or in self-formed pairs to complete this assignment.</p>	35%	June 17
<p>Participation - Students take part in individual and group activities during synchronous Zoom classes to gain check marks for participation. To earn check marks, students join discussion and post comments (approx.125-250 words) in response to prompts provided during class time. Posts will be reviewed for quality of content and engagement during class. One check mark may be earned per synchronous class to a total not exceeding seven check marks. Students must post their response to D2L Discussion on the day of class.</p>	5%	Throughout term

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Submission of Assignments

You must complete all assignments or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the correct version.

Follow assignment instructions carefully. Submit all assignments electronically by uploading them to the designated D2L Dropbox. Do not email assignments unless directed to by your professor, or if it is stated on the assignment instructions. Assignments are due via 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 the course number (i.e., COMS 383) and your last name in the file name of all assignments.

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***. 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. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

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 that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

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 total numeric points will be converted to percentage for the midterm test, the final test, and participation.

Grade			Dept of CMF	Letter grade %
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Point Value	Description	Grade	grade scale equivalents*	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 Web pages and visual media.

You must document direct quotations, paraphrases and ideas drawn from sources where ever they appear in your text. Include both in-text citations and a complete reference list. It is not enough to only have a reference list at the end of an assignment. 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.

Using quotes: 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 use the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (APA, MLA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre 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

Need help with your writing or citing sources? Consult your instructor or contact the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library at https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Copyright Legislation: All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright

(www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct and Consequences: 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. 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 information about your research ethics responsibilities, visit <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 deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources: For information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health, Student Success programs, Student Ombuds Office, Student Union, and Safewalk visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines>. For D2L resources, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings: Available on D2L.