

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
COMS 338 (L01): Introduction to Public Relations
Spring 2023: May 3 to June 15 (excluding May 22)

Lecture: MW 09:00 to 11:45am (*This is an in-person, on-campus course.*)

Instructor: Dr. Monique Solomon
Email: solomonm@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours: M 12-2, immediately after class or email to make an 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

Spring courses are condensed, and it is essential to stay up to date on readings and assignments. The course schedule will be available on the course D2L site. Students should check D2L and their '@ucalgary.ca' email regularly for updates. In this class, students are introduced to course material through lectures, discussion, in-class activities, and readings. The course emphasizes learning through participation, which means attendance and attention during class time are essential for success. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

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 public
- 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. Additional readings or screenings may be added on D2L.)

Email Policy

- **Include the course number in the subject line of email sent to your professor.** Include your name in the body of the email *as it appears* in your university registration.
- **Use emails for short, specific inquiries.** If you have detailed questions about the course material or assignments, please make an appointment during office hours.
- **Email will usually be answered M-F between 11am – 6pm.** You can usually expect an answer within 48 hours. Email will not be answered weekends or holidays. Check your @ucalgary.ca email to ensure messages are not in junk folders.
- Do not email assignments unless directed to by your professor
- Be courteous and professional communicating with your professor and fellow students.

Learning Technologies and Requirements

To complete courses University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- 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), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for online courses only).
- If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See <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 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 photography in any class without the instructor's explicit permission. Please familiarize yourself with the University's policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>, and carefully review the information in this outline.

Policy on AI Generated Answers and Material

Answers and responses to all assignments must be authored and produced by the student registered in the course. AI generated answers, responses and material are not acceptable in this course and attempts to pass them off as a student's own will be considered academic misconduct. Any answers, responses or material suspected to be AI generated will be referred to the appropriate University of Calgary authorities for investigation of academic misconduct.

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. You may NOT reproduce, redistribute or copy course materials 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.

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

Assignments will be discussed in class and detailed instructions posted on D2L. Use APA style for all in-text citations, quotations, and referencing.

Midterm Test (15%) May 24-26 (Individual)

The test will be administered online through D2L. It is intended to encourage and evaluate student review of course readings and engagement with course material to date. The open book test will include 40-45 multiple choice questions. Students will have two (2) hours to complete the test. This includes 50% additional time to accommodate for unforeseen technical difficulties. The test will be available for 48-hours, during which time the professor will be closely monitoring email. All students are required to work on their own while completing the test. Additional details posted on D2L and discussed in class.

Media Kit (25%) Due: May 31 (11:59 pm) (Individual)

Students prepare 4-5 one-page assigned PR materials that comprise a basic media kit. A final version of each document will be submitted together as a Media Kit.

Presentation (20%) Scheduled between May 10 to June 14 (Pairs)

In self-formed pairs, students present (8-10 minutes) about a public relations case drawing on course concepts and discussing communications issues, implications, and impacts. Slides and script/notes and two discussion questions must be submitted to D2L by noon the day before presenting. There will be partial grade deductions for late submissions. Note: Group members will receive the same grade on assignments; however, the instructor reserves the right to award differential grades based on group peer reviews or information indicating significantly uneven contributions by group members. Student pairs sign up for their preferred date on D2L on first-come-first-served basis.

Communications Plan (30%) Due: June 15 (11:59 pm) (Individual)

Students prepare a Communications Plan for an assigned case study organization (2000-2400 words). Students may work individually or in pairs to complete the assignment.

Participation (10%) Ongoing throughout term (Individual)

Students take part in class discussions and activities to earn checkmarks indicating participation. To earn checkmarks, students add comments to D2L Discussion during in-class activities. One checkmark may be earned per class, to a total not exceeding ten checkmarks; posts must be made by end of the class day (11:59 pm). Participation will be evaluated based on contributions during in-class discussion, activities, and the quality of D2L posts. Using laptops/devices in a distracting manner will reduce participation grade.

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. Do not email your assignments unless directed to by your professor.

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.

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.

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 all assignments except participation and the midterm test, which will be graded with numeric points then converted to percentage.

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.

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>

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 those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages, A.I. content generators, or visual media.

Students must adhere to the instructor's course policy regarding the use of A.I. generated content in course work. Unsanctioned use of A.I. generated content in course work may be reported as academic misconduct.

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 information on citation and documentation styles (APA) 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 writing or have questions about citing sources, see 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>

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 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/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings: A schedule of topics, readings and detailed assignment instructions will be available on D2L and discussed in class.