

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
COMS 401.60 W22 (L01): Special Topics in Communication and Media Studies
Public Relations Online

Lecture: Tuesday and Thursday 14:00-15:15

Winter 2022: January 10 to April 12 (excluding February 20-26)

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

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR IN-PERSON COURSE DELIVERY

Note: This course will be delivered in-person. If you are unable to participate in-class owing to time differences or geographical location, please arrange to take this course in a future term

Instructor: Dr. Monique Solomon
Email: solomonm@ucalgary.ca
Office: SS 254
Web Page: D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours: Wednesdays 11am -1pm Zoom; By appointment (Zoom or in-person)

Course Description

Special topics courses offer a critical study of contemporary topics or issues related to communications studies, media, technology, culture, and discourse. In the course students will explore broad trends and approaches to online public relations (PR), while staying attuned to established PR principles and practices. The course considers how the field of public relations is transforming as it integrates digital strategies and responds to social media affordances. The course will draw upon scholarly and popular material to consider how public relations is influenced by, and influences strategic communications online between organisations and publics across a variety of social contexts.

Additional Information

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline. Special topics courses are inquiry-based and reading and writing intensive. In this class students will engage with the topic by participating in discussions and in-class activities, and will complete weekly reading and writing assignments. Writing is an essential skill in PR practice therefore high-quality writing with attention to content and mechanics will be expected for all assignments. Students are strongly advised to have completed COMS 383 or another introductory PR class to prepare for this special topic course. The schedule of topics and readings will be available on D2L.

Objectives of the Course

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

- Assess and analyze strengths and weaknesses of online digital approaches in public relations for various cases and contexts
- Discuss online PR approaches in terms of foundational PR principles and practices
- Identify opportunities for using online digital strategies, and explain and justify how the strategies support and develop relationships between organisations and publics
- Outline strategic and tactical digital approaches for public relations scenarios and cases

Textbooks and Readings

The reading list, schedule, and additional readings will be posted on D2L.

Required: Kelleher, T. (2007). Public Relations Online: Lasting Concepts for Changing Media. Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks. An eBook link will be available from the University Bookstore.

Recommended: Whatmough, D. (2019). Digital PR. First Edition. Emerald Publishing Ltd., United Kingdom. An eBook link will be available from the University Bookstore.

Email Policy

- **Include the course number 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 weekends or holidays.
- **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

In order 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 (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>), and carefully review the section on Instructor Intellectual Copyright in this outline.

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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 instructions posted on D2L.

Use APA style for all in-text citations, quotations, and referencing.

Writing Responses (30%) (Individual)

Due Mondays by 11:59 pm (January 17, 24, 31, Feb. 7, 14, March 7, 14, 28, April 4)

Students address prompts about readings, screenings, and/or case materials (weekly range 350-700 words (1-2 pages)). Thursdays a prompt will be provided in class that will involve small group discussion. Individual written responses are due by the following Monday (11:59 pm). Successful responses do well to provide developed answers that demonstrate critical engagement in class and with materials. Evaluation will be based upon quality of content, writing, and referencing. Responses will receive points out of three (good 3, satisfactory 2, completed 1, incomplete or late 0). Students may miss one response at any time in the term without penalty or may complete all responses and the lowest mark will be dropped.

Case Analysis Essay (15%) Due February 28 (Individual)

Students write an 800-1000-word essay on an assigned public relations case, applying/demonstrating course concepts. Topics provided and discussed in class.

Presentation (10%) To be scheduled February 8 – April 12

In self-formed pairs, students present (5-7 minutes) about a case and weekly topic relating to assigned reading(s). Students must submit their presentation materials by 11:59 pm the day before presenting; grade deductions for late submission of materials.

Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (15%) Due March 21 (Individual)

Students prepare a 350-word proposed topic for the **Final Paper** and an annotated bibliography of five peer-reviewed journal articles that would be potential sources for the final paper. Each bibliography entry must be 150-175 words.

Final Paper (25%) Due April 12 (11:59 pm) (Individual)

Students prepare a 2200-2400-word paper explaining and analyzing an issue facing an industry or organization. Topics provided and discussed in class.

Participation (5%) (Individual - ongoing throughout term)

Students take part in class discussions and activities to earn checkmarks indicating participation. To earn check marks, students add comments to D2L Discussion during in-class activities. One checkmark may be earned per class to a total not exceeding ten checkmarks. Comments must be posted to D2L with 24-hours of class time.

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.

Follow all assignment instructions carefully. All assignments are due via upload to D2L (.doc, .docx) 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 all assignments except the writing responses and participation, which will be reviewed with numeric points which will be 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.

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 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 information on documentation styles (APA) visit the Student Success Centre at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with writing see your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. <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/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.