

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
COMS 383 (L01): Introduction to Public Relations
FALL 2020 September 8 to Dec. 9 (excluding Oct. 12 and Nov. 9-13)
Lecture: TR 9:30 – 10:45

**Lectures will be synchronous Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30- 10:45
and will include discussion and activities for part or all of class time.**

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR FALL 2020

Fall 2020 courses will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please read the outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate at the usual scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time). Note: The 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.

If you will not be able to participate in scheduled synchronous class sessions due to time differences, please arrange to take this course when it is offered in-person in the future.

Synchronous course sessions for this course will normally be hosted on Zoom, a video-conferencing program. To access scheduled Zoom sessions, go to the course site on D2L, click the COMMUNICATION tab, and select Zoom 5- or 10- minutes before class begins.

Instructor: Dr. Monique Solomon

Email: solomonm@ucalgary.ca

Web Page: D2L (access via MyUofC portal)

Office Hours: Available for email or video consultation Wednesdays 9:30–11:30
Please email to set an appointment during office hours.
Include COMS 383 in the subject line of all email.

Course Description

In this introductory course students will learn foundational principles and practices of Public Relations (PR). The course covers history, ethics, and theory, and the role of public relations in corporate, government, and cause-related organizations. Weekly topics include strategic planning, research and evaluation in PR programs, writing for PR, media relations, 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.

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, Janis T., and Parnell, Lawrence J. (2019). Introduction to Strategic Public Relations: Digital, Global, and Socially Responsible Communication. Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA.

A digital copy of the textbook (CAD) is available for rent from Vital Source at <https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/interactive-introduction-to-strategic-public-janis-teruggi-page-lawrence-v9781544322308>

Additional readings will be posted on D2L.

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 be answered M-F between 10 am – 6 pm.** You can generally expect an answer within 48 hours. Email will not be answered on Sundays.
- **Email is best used for short specific inquiries.** If you have detailed questions about the course material or assignments, please make an appointment during office hours.
- Students should ensure they have access to and regularly check their '@ucalgary.ca' email address. Check that course email is not filtered in spam, clutter or junk folders.
- Email to your professor and your fellow students must be courteous and professional.

Learning Technology Requirements for University of Calgary Courses

This is an online course. Students should ensure they have access to the following software and tools before the start of the course.

- *Computer.* A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- *Word Processor.* Use of Microsoft Office is recommended. Assignments will require professional formatting, such as tables and headers. MS Office is available to UCalgary students through Office 365.
- *PDF Reader.* Students need to open pdfs as well as create pdf files of their assignments throughout the course.
- *Current Web Browser.* Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser. To avoid technical issues with D2L and Adobe Connect, students are strongly advised to ensure their devices are compatible with D2L. To check system compatibility, navigate to the 'my tools' tab and then system check.
- A webcam (built-in or external), microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone. Most laptops have these technologies built-in.
- If you have technical difficulties, contact the university's IT department at <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 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 class. All statements and interactions during class time are a matter of group privacy and cannot be publicized.

Assignments and Evaluation

COMS 383 L01 will be delivered in synchronous Zoom meetings that will include lecture, discussion and activities for part or all of class time. All assignments will be discussed in class and instructions posted on D2L.

Weekly Activities (25%) (Individual)

Activity dates are September 15, 22, 29, October 6, 13, 27, Nov. 3, 24, and Dec. 1.

Throughout the first half of the term students will be assigned weekly activities related to readings in the textbook. The activities may be in formats including written (not exceeding 300-words), video (3 minutes), or quiz (10 multiple choice questions). *Every Tuesday the new weekly activity will be discussed in class and instructions posted on D2L.* Completed activities are due the following Tuesday by noon. Completed activities will receive points out of three (good 3, satisfactory 2, completed 1). Late submissions will not be accepted. Students are excused from the activity the week they present their case study.

Case Study Presentation (20%) (Group) Due: To be scheduled between Sept 29-Dec 3

In self-formed groups of three, students deliver a 12-minute, 12-slide 'Ignite' style presentation on an assigned case applying/demonstrating course concepts provided (live or recorded). Following the presentation groups lead a 12-minute discussion with the class via Zoom on dates to be scheduled between September 29 and December 3. Student groups may sign up for their preferred date via D2L on a first-come-first served basis. **Slides, presentation script/notes, and two discussion questions must be posted on D2L by noon the day before the presentation.**

Media Kit (30%) (Individual) Due: Tuesday, October 20 (11:59 pm)

Students (individually) prepare one-page assigned PR materials that comprise a basic media kit. Time will be allotted during Zoom class time to workshop the materials. A final version of each document will be submitted together as a Media Kit.

Communications Plan (25%) (Group) Due: Tuesday, December 8 (11:59 pm)

In self-formed groups of three, students prepare a Communications Plan (2500 words) for an assigned case study organization to be discussed during class *November 3*. Time may be allotted during Zoom meetings to workshop the assignment. **Groups must submit a 300-word draft outline and a working thesis by November 17.**

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.

Follow assignment instructions carefully. Assignments are due via upload to D2L (.doc, .docx, or .pdf) on the due date stated on the course outline, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. Please include your name and ID number on all assignments AND include your name in the file name of all documents uploaded to D2L.

It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the correct version.

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

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 case study presentation, media kit and communications plan, whereas total numeric points will be converted to percentage for weekly activities.

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 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, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to 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: 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 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

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