

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
Communication Studies (COMS) 383, Lecture L01:
Introduction to Public Relations
Summer 2015

Class dates: July 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, 30 and August 4, 6, 11 and 13, 2015
Lectures, days and times: TuTh 9:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

Instructor: Kerry McArthur

Office Location: SS 307

E-Mail: kjmcarth@ucalgary.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday at noon, or upon request

Course Description

This course encourages students to both understand current practices in the public relations field and challenge common (viz., outmoded) assumptions in the discipline. Drawing upon the interdisciplinary work of critical theorists/media sociologists (viz., Foucault, Goffman, Habermas, Bourdieu) and international PR scholars (Berger, L'Etange, Johansson, Moffitt), COMS 383 aims to explore public relations as a contested, fragmented and political practice that is best informed by multiple perspectives and informed research strategies.

Additional Information

- The course takes a seminar format in which students help lead the discussion and engage with the assigned readings.
- This is a reading- and writing-intensive course.

Objectives of the Course

This course introduces students to a newly critical approach to public relations as a practice that serves not only organizational management and owners/shareholders but (as importantly) internal and external stakeholders. Explored in special issues of *Public Relations Review* (2005) and the *Journal of Public Relations Research* (2005), and taken up in the *SAGE Handbook of Public Relations* (2010), this approach encourages discussions around negotiation, inclusion, dialogue and shared power in the organization. By the end of the course, the student will:

- Be knowledgeable about the critical/social theory that newly informs public relations practice;
- Be cognizant of/conversant with older models of PR as it is practiced in most North American organizations;
- Be introduced to developing and ongoing PR issues in Canadian and international government, industry, media, health and education sectors;
- Be comfortable using academic, policy and media sources to present the results of thinking and research.

Textbooks and readings

There is no required textbook; there are however required readings (to be posted) that may be accessed via the University of Calgary library.

Internet and electronic communication device/professionalism information

Cellphones will be silenced and put away for the duration of the class. Laptops and tablets may be used *only* for taking notes.

When contacting the instructor by e-mail, use the tag "COMS 383" in your subject line.

Assignments and Evaluation

You will be graded on four components:

1. *New release rewrite* (20%); due July 14 by midnight
2. *Quizzes* (2 x 15% = 30%); held July 21 and August 4 in class
3. *Group research project* (35%); due August 14 by midnight
4. *Group project presentation* (15%); August 11 and 13 in class

1. *News release rewrite* (20%): Individual students will a) research a noteworthy organizational event that used a news release as a key communication tactic; and b) rewrite that same news release engaging elements of critical public relations theory.

2. *Quizzes* (2 x 15% = 30%): Two quizzes covering course readings and discussions will be held July 21 and August 4 in class.

3. *Group research project* (35%): Pre-selected student groups will a) research and select for analysis a publicly traded organization that has experienced reputation damage, and b) devise a rejuvenated critical public relations strategy (including elements of advertising/marketing, traditional public relations, social media, etc.) for that organization. The project document will comprise 9 to 11 pages of research material, analysis and recommendations, not including a References section.

4. *Group project presentation* (15%): At course end, student groups will present the results of their research project to the instructor, the class, and a practicing PR or management 'juror,' all of whom will pose questions to the presenters; student groups will be graded in part on their ability to respond constructively to these questions and comments. Groups will discuss their group research project findings in a 20-minute presentation via a PowerPoint slide deck.

Registrar-scheduled final examination: No

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

Policy for Late Assignments

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

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System & Department of Communication, Media and Film

Grade Scale Work in this course will be graded using letter grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%

3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

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.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/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 (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calgary Police Service• Emergency Text Messaging• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly• Safewalk Program	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IT help line	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing Support Services• Student Services Mobile App	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faculty of Arts Reps• Student Ombudsman	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds

SU WELLNESS CENTRE

- **Counselling Services**
- **Health Services**
- **Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE**
- **Online resources and tips**

403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm

<http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling>

<http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health>

403-266-HELP (4357)

<http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus>

If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.