

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 401.60, L01
Special Topics in Communication and Media Studies:
PUBLIC RELATIONS ONLINE

Summer 2019

Tuesday, July 2 – Tuesday, August 13
Lecture: TR 13:00-15:45

Instructor: Dr. Monique Solomon
Office: SS 218
E-Mail: solomonm@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Tuesdays after class or by appointment

Course Description

Special topics courses offer a critical study of contemporary topics or issues related to communications studies, media, technology, culture, and discourse. This course introduces students to the principles and practices of public relations (PR) in online new media contexts. The course will explore how the field of public relations is transforming as it integrates digital strategies and responds to social media affordances. The course emphasis is on theory and analysis of new media approaches to communications and PR research and planning. In the course students will draw on communications and public relations theories to examine PR practices in online environments, and critically assess examples of PR online.

Additional Information

A special topics course is reading and writing intensive particularly during the condensed summer term. Students should come to class prepared by completing assigned readings. Class time is used to engage with course material through discussion and class activities.

Objectives of the Course

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

- Think critically about and assess public relations in new media and online contexts in terms of the foundational principles and practices of traditional public relations
- Recognise challenges and opportunities of using digital strategies to develop relationships between organisations and publics
- Understand the strategic and tactical public relations functions new media offers

Textbooks and Readings

Required readings will be posted on D2L.

Internet and Electronic Devices

- Come to class ready to participate in discussions and activities.
- During class while using your laptop for taking notes or in-class activities, please keep your focus on our class not on working for other classes, or on gaming, messaging, or shopping etc., and turn off phones and other devices during class.
- Close all electronics during presentations by your fellow students. Working on a laptop or device during student presentations may impact your participation grade.
- Audio or video recording of lectures or screen slides is not allowed in class unless you are given explicit permission by the professor.

Email

Include **COMS 401** in the subject line of all email sent to your professor. Include your name in the email as it appears in your university registration. All communication with your instructor and your fellow students should be written in a courteous, professional manner.

Email is best used for short specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions about the course material or assignments, please speak with your professor in-person.

Email will be answered weekdays during regular working hours, and usually on a first-come, first-served basis. You can generally expect an answer within 24 hours, but email will not normally be answered in the evening or on weekends. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be replied to until the next business day.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment details are posted on D2L and reviewed in class.	Weight	Due
Reading Response Paper Students write a 1200-word response to an assigned reading. Prompts for writing the reading response will be provided the first week of classes.	25%	Friday, July 19
Pairs Presentation In pairs, students give a 12-15-minute presentation relating an article of their choice to the weekly topic and readings. The article chosen by the students must be approved by the professor minimum two-days before the presentation. Following the presentation, the students will lead a 15-minute class discussion relating their article to the weekly topic and readings. Students are to post discussion questions the day before their class presentation, and following the presentation post a 500-word reflection about the class discussion.	25%	Scheduled between July 9 – August 8
Term Paper Students research and write a 2200-word paper about the use of social media as a public relations strategy and tactic. Topics will be assigned the first week of classes.	35%	Tuesday, August 13
Term Paper Presentation Students give a 5-minute presentation about their term paper.	5%	Tuesday, August 13
Participation Participation will be evaluated based on contribution during class discussions and in-class activities. Participation grading considers attentive listening, making informed thoughtful comments, and demonstrating	10%	Throughout term

familiarity with the required readings. Disrupting or distracting the class, or using laptops and devices in a distracting manner will result in loss of marks on the participation grade.		
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Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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

Submission of Assignments

Follow assignment instructions carefully. Assignments are due via uploads to D2L on the due date stated on the course outline, unless otherwise indicated by the instructor.

If it is not possible to hand in your assignment directly to your instructor, 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 marked final exams in SS 320. 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/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

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

Student Accommodations and Deferrals:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework 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 for 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, please see the following:

- Sec. N.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html>
- FAQs for Students at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Note that when accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to that of another assignment or test.

For information on deferrals, see the following sections in the *University Calendar*:

- Sec. G.7 Deferral of Term Work at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>
- Sec. G.6 Deferral of Final Exam at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades. Course work is graded using a combination of letter grades and weighted raw scores for individual assignments. The reading response, term paper and presentation, and the pairs presentation are graded using letter grades. The participation grade is calculated using a weighted score out of ten. All assignments are weighted based on the percentage value for the course. The chart below outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

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%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. 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 support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

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.

APA Referencing

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>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <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 (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve 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/
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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Please see the schedule of topics on the next page.

Schedule of Topics - COMS 401.60 L01 Summer 2019

This is the anticipated schedule of topics. Scheduling changes will be communicated via D2L. It is your responsibility to check for updates and to ensure email via D2L are received at your correct email address.

Week	Date	Topics
<i>Week 1</i>	July 2 & 4	Introduction: New rules of engagement?
<i>Week 2</i>	July 9 & 11	Research: Understanding opportunities and affordances
<i>Week 3</i>	July 16 & 18	Analysis: The long-tail of strategic planning
<i>Week 4</i>	July 23 & 25	Communication: Building conversation in third places
<i>Week 5</i>	July 30 & August 1	Evaluation: Tools of perception and measurement
<i>Week 6</i>	August 6 & 8	Future Engagements: Bridging the basics
<i>Week 7</i>	August 13	Due: Term Paper Presentations (5%) Due: Term Paper Due (30%)