

**Public Relations (COMM 260)
Spring 2021 (Online)**

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This course examines the development and significance of the field of public relations, both historically and today. Students will learn strategies and techniques involved in the practice of public relations and will develop their own public relations campaigns over the course of the semester. Students learn not only the foundational skills and background necessary to become public relations professionals, they also develop and apply critical thinking skills as they create their own public relations campaigns.

By the end of the semester students will be able to understand:

- The role and function of public relations;
- The practices involved in public relations, including researching, planning, communicating about, and evaluating campaigns;
- How new technologies and Internet platforms are changing public relations;
- Potential careers and professional opportunities in the field of public relations; and
- Controversies in the field, as well as how to practice public relations ethically.

Required Materials: There are no materials required to purchase for this class. All readings and supplemental content will be uploaded to our course's Canvas page.

Assignments:

- Quizzes (100 points)
- Participation (100 points)
- Surveys (50 points)
- Introduction Discussion (25 points)
- Social Media Analysis (50 points)
- Campaign Development Project (200 points)
- Total = 525

Grades:

Final grades will be calculated by taking your total points earned and dividing by the possible number of points. The percent calculated will determine your final grade.

A 93-100	A- 90-92	B+87-89	B 83-86
B- 80-82	C+77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62	

A Note on Online Classes and Learning

Please be aware that online courses are typically more work than face-to-face courses. Some students find it difficult to self-monitor their progress in a course compared to one that meets in person. Online classes require a high level of self-discipline and avoidance of procrastination. To

assist you in learning to manage your online learning I have listed a number of resources on our courses Canvas page titled “Online Learning: Best Practices, Suggestions, and Tips.”

Unlike some other online classes, this course is not self-paced. There are due dates for graded elements and your participation is assessed each week. Failure to complete work by the due dates will negatively affect your grade in the course. However, it is up to you how you engage with the course materials. You may choose to complete lectures and assignments all at once, or break them up throughout the week.

Course Policies

Class Attendance: My expectations for attendance are different for an online course than one that meets face-to-face. As this class is held asynchronously, in order for you to attend you must watch and take notes on uploaded lectures, complete assignments, and participate in discussions. There is no grade for attendance, but I do assess participation.

Technology: I will upload recordings of each week’s lectures, and each week has a dedicated module on Canvas. Modules will open on Sunday evenings and, once opened, remain accessible for the remainder of the semester. Please practice good netiquette (i.e., net etiquette) by behaving, writing, and speaking professionally during class. Please also check your email at least once daily.

Since this is an online course, you are expected to have reliable and regular Internet access. It is your responsibility to address any computer problems that might occur. Technology support is always available to you by calling (540) 887-7075 or visiting OIT’s webpage (<https://go.marybaldwin.edu/oit/staunton-campus-student/>).

At a minimum, you will need the following to participate in this course:

- Access to a computer with an updated operating system and the Internet.
- Updated Internet browsers compatible with Canvas.
- Media players, such as QuickTime, Windows Media Player or VLC Media Player
- Adobe Reader or alternative PDF readers
- MS Office or OpenOffice

Assignments: Assigned readings should be completed by the first day of the week for which they are assigned. They provide the framework for lecture materials as well as discussions and assignments. Although I recommend completing readings before engaging with other course materials, you may find that your preferred learning style is to take notes on the lecture first then complete the reading(s).

Academic (Dis)honesty and Plagiarism: Be very familiar with the Honor Code and do not violate it. Unless otherwise instructed, students must write all assignments on their own. *Do not let another student write for you, and do not directly copy from the Internet or any other source.* Also, you may **never** turn in the same – or even similar – assignments to instructors for multiple courses without the explicit, written permission of both. In general, any student suspected of plagiarizing will receive a zero for the assignment. Please contact me if this is at all unclear.

Harassment and Hate Speech: These will never be tolerated in class, under any circumstances. Our class is a place where we will speak about many topics and issues that are possibly inflammatory and sensitive. If you have any questions, please ask me.

Email Correspondence: Emails sent to me during the week (M-F) before 5 pm will generally be replied to by midnight. Emails sent after 5 pm on Friday will be responded to the following Monday. I reserve the right to request that you reformat and resend me any emails that: lack a subject heading; lack a salutation; include “text speak”; and/or lack a signature. Part of being a university student is regularly checking your email for course announcements as well as other communications, from me and your peers.

Learning Enhancement: I encourage conferences with me related to course materials and/or assignments. I am happy to look over written drafts prior to due dates, answer questions, and provide clarifications. If there is any ambiguity in your understanding of a particular assignment, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification and assistance from me prior to its due date. The most successful students in this class will think broadly about the assignments, ask for help, complete the readings, contribute to discussions, and demonstrate a solid grasp of language and composition in written assignments.

The Academic Resource Center (ARC): The ARC is your one-stop-shop for writing, math, and all other subject and studentship tutoring. Residential students can meet with tutors virtually or face-to-face in the Center for Student Success, on the first floor of Grafton Library. Online and remote students can work virtually with tutors on papers, assignments, and test-taking strategies. Appointments are scheduled through TutorTrac (tutortrac.marybaldwin.edu). For more information, contact Dr. Carey Usher, Associate Provost (cusher@marybaldwin.edu, 540-887-7064) or ARC@marybaldwin.edu.

Other Resources: I also recommend utilizing the Writing Center (<https://marybaldwin.edu/academic-resource-center/>) to enhance your quality of writing. Also consider getting in touch with Christina Harris (cjharris@marybaldwin.edu), our librarian. She can help you at every stage of the research process. You can find Christina’s contact information at: <https://libguides.marybaldwin.edu/communication>.

Accessibility Services: Any student with documented accessibility needs, who feels they may need academic accommodations while taking this course, should first contact Dr. Carey Usher, Associate Provost (cusher@marybaldwin.edu, 540-887-7064) or Accessibility@marybaldwin.edu.

Taking Care of You: For many (if not all) of us, college presents unique challenges. Even the best of us can benefit from working professionals who can help us manage our time, stress, and anxiety. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the services offered by MBU’s Health and Counseling Services office, and to seek them out if necessary. Your first priority is yourself and your health, so please be mindful of your needs and the resources available to care for yourself effectively. I have linked to the Counseling Center on our Canvas page, but here is their webpage: <https://go.marybaldwin.edu/student/health-counseling-services/>

Assignment Information

Quizzes: All quizzes will be accessed via Canvas. They will be in a variety of formats, including discussions, short answers, and multiple-choice quizzes. You will have one week to complete each quiz unless instructed otherwise.

Introduction Discussion: You will be asked to introduce yourselves to me and the class on Canvas. See the Assignments tab in Module 1 for more information.

Surveys: In order for me to better understand you as a student and what challenges you might experience while taking this course, I ask that you fill out a survey during the first week of the semester. It asks questions about your ability to access the Internet, your interests, and so forth. It will also ask questions about your prior knowledge about materials to be covered in this class. Similarly, at the end of the semester, I will ask you to complete another survey about the knowledge and skills you have gained from this course.

Participation: To earn participation points in this course you are required to contribute to discussion threads each week. Your posts can include questions about lecture materials, comments, or responses to your classmates' posts. To receive full points, contribute to the discussion board(s) as specified in that week's Module. See the Assignments tab in Module 1 for more information.

Social Media Analysis: You will analyze the social media accounts of an organization, corporation, or individual to understand and explain how those profiles help (or harm) them, from a public relations perspective. More information on this assignment will be provided soon.

Campaign Development Project: You will develop a public relations campaign for an existing corporation, organization, or individual. This project will incorporate information and skills learned throughout the semester. More information on this assignment will be provided soon.

Course Schedule

Week of January 11: Course Introduction

Week of January 18: Developing Public Relations Campaigns

Week of January 25: Public Opinion & Persuasion

Week of February 1: Public Relations Research Methods

Week of February 8: Crisis Management

Week of February 15: Media Relations

Week of February 22: Social Media in Public Relations

Week of March 1: New Media and Technologies for Public Relations

Week of March 8: Political Public Relations

Week of March 15: Public Relations for Social Movements

Week of March 22: "Post-Truth" Public Relations

Week of March 29: Research Week

Week of April 5: Public Relations Ethics

Week of April 12: Final Project Presentations*

Deadline for Final Project Submissions: April 19, 2021

* Your presentations will be asynchronous.