

**Western University**  
**Faculty of Information and Media Studies**  
**Master of Media in Journalism and Communication**

**MJCOM 9102A—Introduction to Communications**

**Instructor:** Erin Isings

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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 12:30-1:30, via Zoom.

**Synchronous Meetings:** Tuesdays 1:30-2:30.

**Other Meetings:** Please block Tuesdays from 1-4 in your weekly calendar. We have a few weeks where you will need to attend synchronous sessions from 1-4 or for some portion outside of 1:30-2:30 (e.g., 3:30-3:50). Note that asynchronous work will be adjusted during these weeks. A detailed schedule will be available on OWL in advance.

**Introduction to Communications**

This course will introduce students to the communications field, including media relations, public relations, marketing, crisis management, strategic communication and community relations. Our class format will be lectures, tutorials, field learning (where possible), student presentations and assignments.

**Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Master of Media in Journalism and Communication program.**

**Course Goals/Intended Learning Outcomes**

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

- recognize that communications is about telling a compelling story—and choose the appropriate tools to accomplish the task
- demonstrate an awareness of the evolving nature of communications techniques and technologies, and the changing relationships of communicators with audiences, communities and stakeholders
- describe the role and function of communications and public relations in society
- identify a range of communications techniques and genres, including communications planning, talking points, news releases, key messages and presentations
- distinguish the audience and purpose for communications events and demonstrate the ability to competently and effectively produce the appropriate genre or method to address the issue
- develop knowledge of appropriate communications research methodologies: interviewing sources and research from libraries, archives, documents, databases, and electronic sources
- demonstrate sound communications judgment and apply that knowledge in preparing communications plans
- show an understanding of legal and ethical principles relating to communications
- perform within professional expectations in relation to deadlines, accuracy and stakeholder relations

**Course Content**

While discussing contemporary communications, you will be exposed to sensitive topics and/or material that may be upsetting to you. I will try to give advance warning whenever I am able. We are all learners and understanding others' perspectives is part of becoming a communications practitioner capable of reaching various audiences. We should all be respectful of one another

inside and outside of class while discussing issues we may encounter in class or in our working groups.

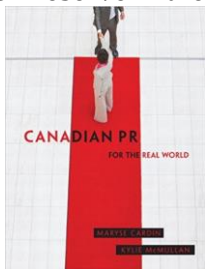
### Course Communications

OWL will be our primary tool for communication. Please check the announcements regularly as well as your UWO email. Additional readings, class preparations, changes to classes and information on assignments will be posted on OWL.

If you have a question regarding an assignment, a reading or about homework, please post it to the discussion board on OWL. This will allow your classmates to benefit from your questions. If you need to email me directly about an individual issue, allow a 24-hour turnaround for a response—and longer over the weekend. Remember to use your UWO email account and please put MJCOM 9102 in the subject line.

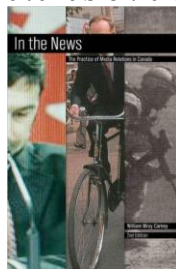
### Course Texts

On reserve in the FIMS Graduate Library and/or available via our OWL site (except Lakoff):



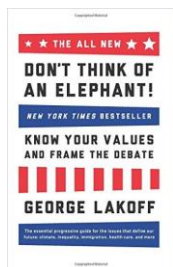
#### **Canadian PR for the Real World**

Maryse Cardin and Kylie McMullan, 2015 Pearson Canada



#### **In the News: The Practice of Media Relations 2nd ed.**

William Wray Carney, 2013 University of Alberta Press



#### **The All New Don't Think of an Elephant – Know Your Values and Frame the Debate**

George Lakoff, 2014 Chelsea Green Publishing



#### **Fundamentals of Public Relations and Marketing Communications in Canada**

William Wray Carney & Leah-Ann Lymer, editors, 2015 Pica Pica Press

You will also need the CP Stylebook and CP Caps and Spelling. (available online via the FIMS Graduate Library)

Other recommended texts:

- A Canadian dictionary – the Oxford English Dictionary is preferred
- A comprehensive grammar book

As future communicators and journalists, you should also

- Read daily news– electronically and/or hard copy
- Listen to and/or view broadcast news, internet news, and other sources, i.e. become a news consumer

| Date  | Topics                                   |
|---|--|
| Week One<br>Sept. 7- 14                                 | Welcome and Course Overview              |
| Week Two<br>Sept. 15-21                                 | Writing for Communications               |
| Week Three<br>Sept. 22-28                               | Audience and Framing                     |
| Week Four<br>Sept. 29-Oct. 5                            | Interviewing                             |
| Week Five<br>Oct. 6-12                                  | Comms Planning Part I                    |
| Week Six<br>Oct. 13-19                                  | Comms Planning Part II                   |
| Week Seven<br>Oct. 20-26                                | Comms Planning Part III                  |
| Week Eight<br>Begins Oct. 27-30 and resumes<br>Nov. 7-9 | Scenario Day prep week                   |
| Week Nine<br>Oct. 31-Nov. 6                             | MMJC Fall Reading Week                   |
| Week 10<br>Nov. 10-16                                   | Scenario Day                             |
| Week 11<br>Nov. 17-23                                   | Advertising and Marketing Communications |
| Week 12<br>Nov. 24-30                                   | Presentations (about)                    |
| Week 13<br>Dec. 1-7                                     | Student Presentations                    |
| Week 14<br>Dec. 8-14                                    | Course Wrap-up                           |

### Assessment

Your final grade will be determined using the following:

| <u>Deliverable</u>                | <u>Due Date</u> | <u>Weight</u> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Media Kit                         | Oct. 12         | 15%           |
| Political Analysis                | Oct. 26         | 15%           |
| Communications Plan               | Nov. 23         | 15%           |
| Communications Audit              | Nov. 30         | 20%           |
| Communications Audit Presentation | Dec. 7          | 15%           |
| Quizzes                           | Ongoing         | 10%           |
| Professionalism                   | Ongoing         | 10%           |

*The above due dates are subject to change as the course progresses. Changes will be announced in class and on OWL. A full assignment sheet and rubric will be posted for the first five deliverables.*

### Media Kit

Using a fictitious media event, create a sample media kit.

## **Political Analysis**

Choose one televised media interview with a Canadian politician. Submit your analysis in a written report.

## **Communications Plan**

Students will write a full communications plan for a provided scenario.

## **Communications Audit + Presentation**

Working in small groups, students will choose a local non-profit organization and examine their communications material. In a written report, students will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the material, as well as provide recommendations for how communications could be improved.

## **Quizzes**

Quizzes will be available via OWL at the start of our Tuesday afternoon synchronous sessions (“LIVE sessions”). The best way to ensure success on these quizzes is to complete the assigned readings, be aware of current news events and be present in class to write the quiz. Students who are absent and/or late to the session will miss out on this opportunity; there will be no mechanism to make these marks up. Quizzes are an independent effort of each student; collaboration and internet use is not permitted.

## **Professionalism**

Engagement and meaningful participation are mandatory requirements of 9102’s professionalism component. Being present, punctual and prepared are the bare minimum.

The basics of what you’ll need to do include:

- complete readings and classwork before specified deadlines; be prepared to discuss content
- make thoughtful online contributions; ensure you follow our course code of conduct (created by you during Week One)
- be fully engaged during in-class and online activities
- display a respectful and professional attitude toward others during all course interactions
- show initiative and a positive attitude; find solutions, not problems
- be constructive, honest, accountable and behave ethically
- represent the MMJC program and Western University in a professional manner in all interactions with the community.

I expect that you’ll show initiative above and beyond the basics to earn professionalism marks. For example, you could volunteer to moderate online discussions or help during in-class exercises. You could also volunteer to facilitate a discussion about communications strategy involved in a current news event. There are many ways to earn professionalism marks; please contact me if you require further info.

The MMJC program rules are very clear about not missing class to complete work for other classes.

If you are unable to attend a LIVE session, refer to the notes below on accommodations. It is the full responsibility of a student who has missed a class to catch up on the work missed and to complete assignments generated during class time. It is recommended that students look out for one another (take notes, etc.) to share with the absent student.

I retain copyright to all MJCOM 9102 course content uploaded and broadcasted through OWL and Zoom. Students are not authorized to copy or distribute course materials, nor are students authorized to record sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation of when the participant has prior written permission of the instructor. I do not authorize you to upload any

course content to note-sharing websites such as OneClass, CourseHero, Studydrive, etc.

**Remote learning sessions for this course may be recorded**—advance notice will be given. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals under special circumstances. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings.

### **Assignments**

All assignments are due via OWL. Late assignments will be penalized with a five per cent deduction per 24 hours late; deduction time starts at the beginning of class. No late assignments will be accepted after graded assignments have been returned. Please keep a copy of your assignment until you receive the original back.

When submitting your work through OWL, **it is the student's responsibility to verify that the submission has been uploaded.** All students are expected to practice appropriate time-management strategies; requests to extend an assignment's deadline will not be granted.

### **Backing Up Personal Computers**

Students are expected to take full advantage of available technology and back up data (work in progress) onto external drives, cloud, USB drives or some other alternative form of data storage. Data back-up should be done after every class, or hourly when working on assignments.

## **Notes from the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies**

### **Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

### **Plagiarism**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. Plagiarism is a major academic (and journalistic) offence. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>). Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

### **Erin's note on plagiarism:**

It's expected that all submitted work will be original work by each student, and all submitted work must be original work created specifically for MMJC 9102A. Students may not repurpose content from other coursework or past courses/internships/employment to use in MMJC 9102A. Students are expected to recognize the limitations of wikipedia and other sources. Please see me if you have any questions.

Remember, images are subject to copyright. Images must be documented carefully and reproduced only under certain conditions.

There are also certain assignments in my course where collaboration is not permitted. This means that students are not permitted to discuss the assignment with one another.

Again, I cannot stress this point enough: **if you are ever in doubt or have any questions, please talk to me about it.**

### **Academic Accommodation**

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

### **Medical Accommodation**

For Western University policy on accommodation for medical illness, see:  
[www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

For work worth less than 10% of the final grade, the instructor will consider requests for academic accommodation on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or by appointment in office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may, however, decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Counselling office.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

### **Compassionate Accommodation**

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations. Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Counsellor. If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire or some other exceptional crises, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

### **Bereavement**

Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation. For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation.

Students seeking additional bereavement leave for religious or other reasons should contact their Academic Counsellors, and provide valid documentation.

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance.

<http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>

Further specific information is given in the Western Academic Calendar.

### **Support Services**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Western's "Health and Wellness" [http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### **Other support services on campus:**

Office of the Registrar: [www.registrar.uwo.ca](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca)

Student Development Centre: [www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)

Psychological Services: [www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych)