

Western University
Faculty of Information & Media Studies
Master of Journalism and Communication

MJCOM 9102A—Introduction to Communications

Instructor: Erin Isings

E-mail: eisings@uwo.ca

Meetings: Tuesdays, 9-11:50 a.m. in FNB 3050 (studio)

Software Sessions: We'll meet from 12-1 on Sept. 26, Oct. 17, Oct. 24, Nov. 7 and Nov. 28 in FNB 3010 (lab)

Office Hours (Zoom link on OWL): Tuesdays 12-1 , Tuesdays 1-2 on Software Session days.

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 we discuss 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.

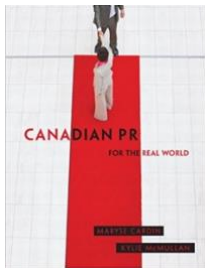
Course Communications

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 (forum) 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.

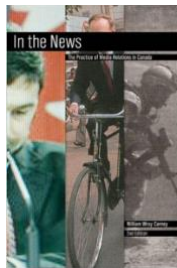
Course Texts

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



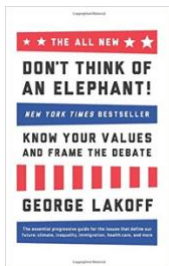
Canadian PR for the Real World

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

Tentative Schedule

Date	Topics	Software Session
Week One—Sept. 12	Welcome and Course Overview	N
Week Two—Sept. 19	Writing for Communications	N
Week Three—Sept. 26	Audience and Framing	Y
Week Four—Oct. 3	Media Relations + Interviewing	N
Week Five—Oct. 10	Branding + Ethics in Comms & PR Media Kit due—15 per cent	N
Week Six—Oct. 17	Comms Planning + DM Strategy Part I	Y
Week Seven—Oct. 24	Comms Planning + DM Strategy Part II Political Analysis due—15 per cent	Y
Week Eight—Oct. 30-Nov. 3	MMJC Fall Reading Week	N
Week Nine—Nov. 7	Social Media Marketing	Y
Week 10—Nov. 14	Scenario Day Prep Week Comms Plan due—15 per cent	N
Week 11—Nov. 21	Scenario Day (in-studio exercise) Sched to be posted to OWL	N
Week 12—Nov. 28	Digital Marketing + Knowledge Mobilization Comms Audit Due—20 per cent	Y
Week 13—Dec. 5	Student Presentations of Comms Audit Comms Audit Presentation—15 per cent	N
Week 14—Dec. 12	Course Wrap-up	N

Assessment

Your final grade will be determined using the following:

<u>Deliverable</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Media Kit	Oct. 10	15%
Political Analysis	Oct. 24	15%
Communications Plan	Nov. 14	15%
Communications Audit	Nov. 28	20%
Communications Audit Presentation	Dec. 5	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. 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 weekly classes. 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 are 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 assignments 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; display the ability to collaborate with a variety of colleagues
- 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 class meeting, 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 or 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.

I'm not planning any remote learning sessions for this term, but in case we have to go there: **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 me 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 graded version. When submitting your work through OWL, it's your 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.

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

Health/Wellness Services Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

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.

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

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.

Students are reminded that plagiarism —using another's work, ideas, or words without giving credit—is a serious scholastic offence. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of generative artificial intelligence to create content that is submitted as one's own. Students who use AI-content generators (such as ChatGPT) to complete assignments without attribution or permission from the instructor are committing a scholastic offence.

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.

If you are ever in doubt or have any questions, please talk to me about it.