



**SYLLABUS**

**STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS FOR POLITICS & GOVERNMENT**

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Contact Hours: 40

London, UK

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

An in-depth examination of how governments and political leaders seek to communicate strategically to domestic and international audiences, including the interrelated fields of governmental communications, political campaigning, and public diplomacy. The course will examine international examples, including a focus on the UK and continental Europe.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Student Outcomes:

X	<b>Communication Competencies</b> – In-class activities, presentations, and the project will advance your presentation and listening skills.
X	<b>Problem Recognition, Prioritization, and Decision-Making Competencies</b> – Both assignments will involve problem recognition as you identify the issues confronting real-life communicators, and in the case of the second assignment put forward creative ideas to tackle them.
X	<b>Ethics and Social Responsibility Competencies</b> –communication within an environment involving ethical and social responsibility – and legal and regulatory – issues have to be borne in mind. This course will encourage you to reflect on these issues.
X	<b>Leadership, Team and Personal Competencies</b> – You will be responsible for preparing and presenting ideas for the second assignment as part of a team.
X	<b>Political and Governmental Knowledge Competencies</b> – Knowledge of communication is essential to those working in politics and government, and indeed, given the role of government and politics, an understanding of it is important in all fields.

The course will:

1. Explain the concepts fundamental to the study of political & governmental communications
2. Examine how different communication techniques are employed in political & governmental communications
3. Examine political campaigning
4. Examine the role of lobbying
5. Examine developing media strategies and media handling
6. Explore examples of crisis communications
7. Examine propaganda and public diplomacy, including country branding
8. Understand key ethical and legal issues
9. Describe how strategic communications in these fields is developing in response to contemporary challenges
10. Enable you to outline how you would respond to communications challenges

### **INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY**

This class will involve a combination of interactive lectures and individual and group activities and exercises, as well as visits and guest lectures from practitioners and media-based examples. Lectures will cover core concepts, illustrated with mainly UK/European examples, but with some examples from elsewhere and comparisons to the US; these are also explored in the suggested reading. However the subject is something we are all immersed in every day, consciously and unconsciously, so this will help us explore the subject in different ways throughout the course. Students will be expected to prepare themselves by following the subject outside class, including through the news and social media but also through what they witness in Britain or any additional travelling or experiences during the semester. As the course progresses there will be seminars and presentations, both involving discussion, supplemented by updates on these topics in the news and what those stories tell us.

### **METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)**

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Engagement in class	20%
Seminar paper and presentation	40%
Final project (paper and presentation))	40%

1. **Engagement in class (20% of course grade):** Your presence alone does not add to your engagement grade, but repeated unexcused absences will lower it even if you participate regularly when you are in class. Please see the GEO attendance policy for details. Your participation grade will be determined primarily by the frequency and quality of the following:
  - a. your thoughtful and informative responses to class exercises and questions posed; participation in the weekly “Public Communication in the news” element of the class;and

- b. your contributions to discussions your classmates initiate, including seminars where others are presenting.

*Grading guidelines for participation*

Engagement Component	90 to 100% (A range)	80 to 89% (B range)	70 to 79% (C range)	60-69% (D range)	0% (F)
<b>Attendance (unexcused absences)</b>	Misses 0 classes	Misses 1-4 classes	Misses 4-5 classes	Misses 5-6 classes	Misses >6 classes
<b>In-class discussion, exercises</b>	Always prepared, engaged and actively involved: provides examples, asks questions, makes thoughtful comments in class	Prepared and engaged but passive in class; participates when asked directly	Seldom participates but listens attentively	Does not pay attention in class	Disrupts class or behaves disrespectfully toward others
<b>Overall Grade</b>	Participation score is AVE (attendance, in-class engagement) <b>Example: You attended all classes (100%), you seldom participated in class discussions but usually listened attentively (75%). Your final participation grade is <math>[(100 + (2*75))/3 = 83</math> out of 100 points.</b>				

**2. Seminar presentation and written paper (40% total, of which presentation is one-quarter of grade):**

You will present individually to the class about a specific real example of strategic communications for politics and/or government. Please agree your topic with your tutor. You will need briefly to explain the situation, then explore what was done and why and what the results were. You also need to reflect on any wider lessons that can be learned. Your presentation should last about 10 minutes and stimulate questions/discussion. You should also email your tutor a properly referenced 1,000 word paper based on the presentation by the end of the course.

*There will be a further discussion of the requirements for this assignment in class.*

**3. Strategic Communication Project - team effort in groups of about 3 (40% of course grade of which the presentation is one-quarter of grade):**

In your groups (of your own choosing) you will devise a strategic communications strategy on a political and/or governmental theme of your choosing. While your topic must be agreed with the tutor, it can in principle relate to any country or aspect of politics or government. You should use POSTAR or similar communication strategy tools (which will be discussed in class) to ensure you develop all aspects of your campaign strategy. You should be prepared to take questions.

All members of the group must play a full part in the presentation during the last class which should last not more than 15 minutes (plus questions).

By the end of that week you must submit by email an individual version of your strategy – you are free to change anything you like from the oral presentation. It should be no more than 1,000 words in length. There is no set format, but presenting your ideas in an attractive and readily intelligible way is part of the challenge.

*There will be more briefing on all aspects of the project during classes.*

#### *Grading Guidelines for the assignments*

**A-level work (90, 95, 100):** This project meets all of the following criteria:

- a. Content – the project is complete (includes all required parts);
- b. Format – the project closely follows provided guidelines;
- c. Quality of the analysis – conclusions are based on well-researched and thoroughly analyzed information; the thought process is logical and demonstrates a clear understanding of the issues;
- d. Quality of writing – the project is well written; the ideas are organized in concise and clear fashion, there are few if any grammatical and spelling errors;
- e. Application – the project skillfully incorporates relevant consumer research and concepts from the readings and class discussions;
- f. Sources of information – all assertions are substantiated by reputable, current information sources, which are cited immediately following the assertions. All sources are also listed in a bibliography. Citations and bibliography must follow MLA or APA format (choose one to use throughout your reports).

**B-level work (80, 85, 89):** This project does not meet content, format, and/or quality of writing criteria. Nonetheless, it clearly demonstrates a good quality analysis and an excellent ability to apply relevant research to the issues at hand, and it meets requirements for sources used.

**C-level work (70, 75, 79):** This project may or may not meet criteria for content, format, and/or quality of writing. However, its major problems stem from a poorly developed analysis and incorrect application of research. For example, conclusions are poorly justified and there is little evidence of primary or secondary research.

**D-level work (60, 65, 69):** This project does not meet any of the specified criteria for content, format, quality of the analysis, quality of writing, and application of consumer research.

**F-level work (<60):** No project has been submitted for grading.

#### Expectations for Written Assignments (homework and project reports)

**Writing guidelines:** I expect you to adhere to the writing guidelines in the PSOBA handbook [“Expectations for Student Writing”](#). Good written communication is critical in business, and correct spelling and grammar are essential to good writing. Therefore, if a paper contains several such mistakes, I will deduct points and, if the errors are distracting enough, return it to you for corrections before grading it.

**Deadlines:** All assignments are to be submitted via email on or before the specified times on the due dates noted in the course calendar. It is your responsibility to keep up with all deadlines and submit everything on time. Late assignments will not be accepted.

### INDICATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

**NB** *Dates/arrangements may change!*

<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Class times: TBC</b>	<b>Indicative Class Topics / Activities</b>
Week 1, 24-28 June	Session 1 Tuesday 25 June, 9.30- 11.00am	<i>Meet &amp; greet</i> , course overview  Public communication in the news: introduction  What is strategic communication? What makes strategic communication in politics and the public sector different? The role of different communications techniques. Reading: <i>PR Today</i> , chapter 6  Set up seminar presentations
	Session 2 Thursday 27 June, 9.30am- 12.30	Public communication in the news: students to take turns to present  Introduction to POSTAR – a strategic communications planning tool: reading – <i>PR Today</i> , chapter 10  Film & discussion: <i>In the Loop</i> – contrasting communication styles in UK and US
Week 2, 1-5 July	Session 1 Tuesday 2 July, 2-5pm	Public communication in the news  Scotland: a study in political communication – preparation for your visit & brief for exercise  Pre-election discussion  Briefing for final group presentations in Week 4.
Week 3, 8-12 July	Session 1 Monday 8 July 9.30am-12.30	Public communication in the news: General Election post mortem  Scotland: hypothetical exercise in strategic communication for politics & government  Seminar presentations 1

	Session 2 Monday 8 July 2-5pm	Public communication in the news  Crisis management & the Dark Arts: How professional communicators seek to suppress or minimize bad news. Media skills. <i>PR Today</i> , chapters 12 & 14  Seminar presentations 2
	Session 3 Tuesday 9 July 9.30am -12.30	<b>Visit to Hoffman Agency</b> – details tbc
	Session 4 Tuesday 9 July 2-5pm  <b>Evening</b>	Public communication in the news  Ethics, the law and communication, lecture and exercise. Reading: <i>PR Ethics</i> , chapters 6, 7 & 8.  Ethical hypothetical exercise  Seminar presentations 3  <b>Theatre visit – The Constituent</b> - details tbc
	Session 5, Thursday 11 July, 9.30-12.30	Public communication in the news  <i>War, propaganda and public diplomacy. Excerpt from Wag the Dog film. Reading: PR Ethics, chapter 2</i>  Seminar presentations 4
	Session 6, Thursday 11 July 2-5pm	2 pm <b>Walk in Westminster</b> followed by 4pm: <b>Visit to Churchill War Rooms</b> – where Britain managed its biggest crisis in recent memory: King Charles St, London SW1A 2AQ <a href="https://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/churchill-war-rooms">https://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/churchill-war-rooms</a>
Week 4, 15-19 July	Session 1, Monday 15 July 2-5pm	Public communication in the news  Guest speaker: Trevor Morris, former head of UK’s largest PR consultancy  Seminar presentations 5
	Session 2, Tuesday 16 July 10am-12noon	<b>Weiden &amp; Kennedy visit</b> wklondon.com 16 Hanbury Street London E1 6QR

	Session 3 Tuesday 16 July 2-5pm	Public communication in the news  Seminar presentations 6  Tutorials
	Session 4 Thursday 18 July 9.30am- 12.30	Class presentations

## COURSE READINGS

*PR Today: The Authoritative Guide to Public Relations*, Trevor Morris, Simon Goldsworthy, Palgrave, 2016

*Public Relations Ethics: The Real-World Guide*, Trevor Morris, Simon Goldsworthy, Routledge, 2021

Media sources:

*Useful free to access sources include:*

Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com>

BBC [bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk)

Also:

UK Government Communication Service, <https://gcs.civilservice.gov.uk/>

Public Relations and Communication Association, <https://www.prca.org.uk/>