



Boston University Study Abroad
London

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Strategy and Tactics in British Public Relations
COM CM 413 A (Core course)
Spring 2016

Instructor Information

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| A. Name | Dr Michael Heller |
| B. Day and Time | Wednesday and Thursday, 9am-1pm. Commencing Thursday 14 th January 2016. |
| C. Location | George & Peto Room, 43 Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JU |
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Course Aims

This module aims to teach the background, context, theories, practices and functions of Public Relations in contemporary Britain. In this respect, it will pay strong attention to the environment of British organisations, paying particular attention to politics, society, the economy and the media, as these have such a strong influence on both the structure and practice of PR in the UK. While the focus of the course will be on business it will also pay attention to the use and influence of PR in contemporary British politics. Specifically the course aims to:

- Provide an understanding of the role of public relations in Britain and demonstrate its centrality and increasing importance to organisations. In this context it will show how PR is both strongly related to other business disciplines such as marketing and HRM but also has properties and functions specific to itself alone.
- Give of the history of PR in the UK and US and demonstrate and discuss its theoretical underpinnings which informs much of its practice. In particular it will examine systems, stakeholder, postmodern and critical theory.
- Discuss the growing importance of Corporate Social Responsibility to British corporations and demonstrate how this is becoming strategically central to both their practice of PR and overall corporate identity.
- Teach the structure of the media, politics, business and society in Britain and show how these inform so much of what PR does. In addition, it will examine to what degree PR influences and affects these structures.
- Highlight the ability to select from and apply appropriate academic models to support analysis and insight.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

- Have an understanding the role, operations and techniques of public relations in contemporary Britain
- Have an overview of the context and disciplines of business in Britain and how PR fits into and interacts with these
- Develop an awareness of how the State and politics in Britain use PR
- Understand the theories that underpin PR and the multiple contexts within which it operates
- Be able to detect the operation of PR in contemporary British media and analyse its functioning, purpose and efficiency
- Demonstrate a knowledge of the various debates that surround and inform the practice of PR in Britain and be able to comment critically and analytically upon them

Course Structure

The course will run for 5 weeks and will consist of two weekly classes lasting 4 hours each. Each class will consist of lectures, seminar discussions, student presentations, and case-study work. There will also be a field trip. Students' presentations will usually last 15 minutes, will be done in groups and done on PowerPoint. Students are expected to come to class fully prepared and to take an active part in class activities. Students are also expected to read the relevant literature for each week.

Course Assessment

The assessment for the course will be broken down as follows:

- Individual student report: 40%
- One write-up paper on the Guest Lecture: 25%
- Final examination: 25%
- Seminar performance: 10%

The Report

The report is entitled 'The Roles, Functions and Strategies of Public Relations'. Students are to choose an organisation and show how the role that PR plays within it. This includes how it uses PR to communicate with key stakeholders (e.g. through press releases, social media, product placement, events, CSR), how PR is used to create corporate image and corporate reputation, how it is used within Integrated Marketing Communication and how it functions both internally and externally within the organisation. It should include:

- Overview of the organisation
- How it uses Public Relations
- Where PR is situated in the organisation
- How PR interacts with other department in the organisation
- Techniques and strategies of PR – press releases, media relations, CSR, sponsorship, events, issue management, financial PR, celebrity endorsement, product placement, social media, seeding
- Examples of PR from the organisation – e.g. CSR campaign, media campaign, crisis management, issue campaign, major event, social media campaign
- Recommendations for improvements in PR function

- Conclusion

Students are free to choose any organisation and it does not necessarily have to be a company – it could be a local government or an NGO for example. The organisation must be based in Britain though does not have to be British owned. It could, for instance, be an American subsidiary such as The Body Shop (a subsidiary of L’Oreal) or Asda (a subsidiary of Walmart).

The report should be 2,000-2,500 words, typed and double spaced and thoroughly referenced using the Harvard system. For details on this please see the ‘Cite it Right’ study guide in the library written by Richard Pears and Graham Shields. Please note that the report is not to be written as an essay but in report form – i.e. the text is broken, using headings and subheadings, bullets, numbers, models, diagrams and images. It should, however, be written predominantly in paragraphs and not simply consist of bulleted statements. It should also use at least 2 academic texts – articles or books, not including the textbook, and should be informed by theory, models, academic analysis and examples. **Deadline: Wednesday 16th February, to be handed in at the Student Affairs Office in Harrington Gardens no later than 4.00 pm.**

Guest Lecture Write-up

Our guest lecturer is Yogesh Chauhan, head of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at the Tata Consultancy Group and former head of CSR at the BBC. Students are asked to write a 1,500 word essay entitled ‘The Roles and Functions of CSR in British Companies and Organisations’. This should incorporate material from the guest lecture, the lecture on the topic in class, the trip to Cadbury World and articles on CSR which will be made available to students on Blackboard.

The essay is to be handed in on **Wednesday 3rd February**.

The Examination

The examination will consist of six short essay style questions of which three must be chosen. These are short answers consisting of a page and a half to two pages. Each question carries equal marks.

Seminar Performance

Students will be graded on how well prepared they are for class and how actively they contribute to discussions, particularly during case study activities. Students will also be placed in groups which will give one case study based presentation over the course. Quality of this presentation will be factored into their overall seminar performance grade.

Grading

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and policies on plagiarism: <http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester>

**Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absence*

Attendance Policy

Classes

All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, and field trip in order to fulfill the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme.

Authorised Absence:

Students who expect to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorized Absence Approval Form 10 working days in advance of the class date (except in the case of absence due to illness, for which students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor's note as soon as possible). **Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorised absence**

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:

- Illness, supported by a local London doctor's note (submitted with Authorised Absence Approval Form).
- Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor)
- Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).

The Directors will only in the most extreme cases (for example, death in close family) allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.

Unauthorised Absence:

Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive a **4% grade penalty** to their final grade for the course whose class was missed. This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a 'Fail' in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

Lateness

Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will require a meeting with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalised.

Reading

The textbook for the course is Ralph Tench & Liz Yeomans, *Exploring Public Relations*, Prentice Hall, Pearson. The course will follow large parts of the text and it is essential for students to purchase the book which can be obtained from the University. Students are also encouraged to read other academic texts relating to PR, business and the media including academic articles which are in the library and on the course website and will be made available in class.

Additional readings may be posted on Blackboard: <http://learn.bu.edu>

Course Chronology

| Week | Lecture/Theme |
|--|---|
| 1: Introduction Thurs 14th January | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR in Britain, History and Roles: An Overview • Integrated Marketing Communications |
| 2: Britain Weds 20th January | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Media Context of PR in the UK • The Political Context of PR in the UK |
| 3: CSR Thursday 21st January | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSR • Brand Equity and CSR |
| 4: Guest Lecture & Theory Weds 27th January | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest Lecture • PR Theories and Application |
| 5. Field Trip Thurs 28th January | <p style="text-align: center;">Trip to Cadbury World</p> <p>This is an all day trip. We will leave at 9.00 am and be back by 5.00 pm</p> |
| 6: Corporate Identity and Stakeholders Weds 3rd February | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audiences Stakeholders and the Public • Corporate Identity and Image |
| 7: Internal and Financial PR Thursday 4th February | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal PR • Financial PR |
| 8: Sectors Weds 10th February | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts, Leisure and Entertainment PR • Politics and PR |
| 9: Sectors Thurs 11th February | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fashion PR • Revision |
| 10: Final Examination Mon 15th February | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination <p>This will be a take home examination. Students are to collect it from the student affair office at 9.00 am and email to me by 2.00 pm.</p> |

* **Contingency Class Date: Friday 5th February.** Students are obligated to keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled

** **Please note: students will have their first Internship Seminar meeting on 10th Feb. Please see Internship Seminar Timetable for time and room.**

*****All students must attend a mandatory drop-in session (to sign Internship Agreement and for any questions about placement, social programme, travel and academics) on 15th Feb in the Boston Room, 43 Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JU. Food will be served!**

Sessions and Activities

Session 1

Group Discussion

How do the practices and functions of PR in Britain and the US differ? To what degree is this due to historical factors?

Session 2

Activity 1 – The British Press

Students will be given an assortment of the major British national newspapers. They will be split into three groups and choosing two papers will be asked to give a short presentation on:

- Which social groups are the papers aimed at?
- What is the main content of the paper?
- What is its political orientation?
- How could the paper be used for press releases – e.g. what products and services could be promoted in it?

Activity 2 – British Media and Regulation

Students will be divided into four groups and research one of the four media sectors given below online and then give a short presentation. The presentation should give a simple outline of the selected media sector in the UK giving a brief description of its structure and the current issues that it faces.

The media sectors are:

- The press
- Television
- The internet and multimedia (including PC's)
- Radio

Students should consult Ofcom, the British state communications and media regulator, for information and reports on the above areas at www.ofcom.org.uk and for the press should consult the Press Complaints Commission at www.pcc.org.uk.

Session 3

Presentation – Group A

Activity

CSR and Brand Equity

In groups students are asked to find a brand of their choice and in a mini-presentation show how CSR contributes to its brand equity.

Or

Choose one of the following organisations in the UK:

- Tesco or Sainsbury
- McDonalds
- The Body Shop
- Shell or BP

Research online and give a short presentation outlining the company's CSR programmes. What stakeholders/publics are these aimed at and do you consider them to be operational or strategic PR.

Session 4 – Video: Century of the Self: Part 3.

Session 5 – Trip to Cadburys World. Coach will collect us from Harrington Gardens.

Session 6

Presentation: Group B

Activity

In groups students are to select a company and give a short presentation showing:

- How the company portrays its corporate identity – what associations does it use?
- Which stake holders does this identity appeal to?
- How does this organisational identity reinforce its organisational missions and products?

Session 7

Presentation: Group C

Activity

Examining copies of financial papers/sections students are asked to find examples of Financial PR, particularly in relation to:

- Initial Placing Offer (IPO)
- Merger and Acquisitions or Hostile Takeovers
- Price Sensitive Information
- Financial Calendar – e.g. results and reports

What is the aim of the PR in each instance?

Session 8

Activity

The Class will watch an episode from UK series The Apprentice and discuss the programme

Session 9

Activity

Choosing a fashion brand groups will give short presentations showing:

- The Brand Identity
- What forms of PR are used to promote the brand
- How this integrates with other forms of marketing communication