Instructor and Class Information

A. Name: Dr Kathleen Dixon Donnelly
B. Day and Time: Wednesday and Thursday,
   Lecture: 10 am to 1 pm
   Seminar A: 1:30-2:30 pm
   Seminar B: 2:45-3:45 pm
C. Office Telephone
D. Email
E. Office hours: Wednesday afternoons or Thursday mornings by appointment

Course Aims

This module aims to teach the background, context, theories, practices and functions of public relations in contemporary Britain. We will analyse the environment of British organisations, particularly politics, society, the economy and the media, as these have a strong influence on both the structure and practice of PR in the UK. While the focus of the course will be on business, we will also look at the use and influence of PR in contemporary British politics and the non-profit sector. 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 we will discuss how PR is both strongly related to other business disciplines such as marketing and human resources, but also has properties and functions specific to itself alone.
- Analyse the history of PR in the UK and US and the theoretical underpinnings which inform much of its practice. We will examine systems, stakeholder, and other relevant theory.
- Discuss the growing importance of corporate social responsibility [CSR] to British corporations and demonstrate how this is becoming strategically central to both their practice of PR and overall corporate identity.
- Look at the structure of the media, politics, business and society in Britain and how these inform so much of what PR does. In addition, we will examine to what degree PR influences and affects these structures.
- Demonstrate the ability to select and apply appropriate academic models to support analysis and insight of organizational issues.
Learning Outcomes

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

• Understand 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 understanding of how organizations—business, politics, and non-profit—in Britain use PR.
• Understand the theories that underpin PR and the multiple contexts within which it operates.
• Gain insight into the operation of PR in contemporary British media and analyse its function, 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 five weeks and will consist of two weekly sessions lasting three hours each, followed by a seminar of one hour. The full class sessions will consist of lectures, discussions, case-study work, activities, and/or guest speakers and presentations. There will also be a field trip, preferably to a London public relations agency, early in the course.

Seminar sessions will be facilitated by student groups, which will form part of the final mark. The seminar titles and dates will be assigned to groups during the first class. You are expected to come to class fully prepared and to take an active part in class activities. You are also expected to read any assigned literature for each week.

Course Assessment

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

• **News release:** Writing and distributing a news release, 300 words in the body, **15%, due Thursday, 1st February**, in hard copy and via email.
• **Group seminar:** Working in a group to facilitate a seminar session, **35%, due in seminar, Sessions 6 through 9.**
• **Peer evaluation:** You will have the opportunity to grade your colleagues on their contribution to and participation in your seminar, **5%, due with seminar presentation.**
• **Business report:** Research and objectives for a PR plan, for an organization of your choice: 2,000 words, **35%, due on Monday, 19th February by 5 pm.**
• **Class participation:** Recorded attendance and participation in class activities, **10%**

Detailed briefs for each assessment will be provided in class.
### Course Schedule: All subject to change.

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Full Class Session</th>
<th>Seminars</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1: Thurs., 18th January</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to the module. Discussion of expectations, field trips, and guest speakers. Explanation of syllabus and assessments. Overview of marketing and PR.</td>
<td>Explanation of topics Formation of groups Assignment of dates</td>
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<td><strong>2: Wed., 24th January</strong></td>
<td>UK media context. Media relations in the UK. News release style and format.</td>
<td>Media writing exercise Discussion of seminar requirements</td>
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<td><strong>3: Thurs., 25th January</strong></td>
<td>FIELD TRIP: This will be an all day class, from approximately 10 am to 3:45 pm, including travel time. Details to be discussed in class. Date to be confirmed.</td>
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<td><strong>5. Thurs., 1st February</strong></td>
<td>Using social media for PR: Guest speaker</td>
<td>Group meetings with tutor</td>
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<td><strong>6: Wed., 7th February</strong></td>
<td>PR Planning: SWOT and setting objectives Stakeholder theory and target public analysis</td>
<td>Group seminar 1: Social media campaign</td>
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<td><strong>7: Thurs., 8th February</strong></td>
<td>Reputation Management: Corporate social responsibility</td>
<td>Group seminar 2: Targeting various stakeholders</td>
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<td><strong>8. Wed., 14th February</strong></td>
<td>Reputation Management: Crisis management</td>
<td>Group seminar 3: CSR case study</td>
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<td><strong>9: Thurs., 15th February</strong></td>
<td>Evaluating PR programmes Multi-cultural communications</td>
<td>Group seminar 4: Crisis management case study</td>
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<td><strong>10: Mon., 19th February</strong></td>
<td>Business Report due, in hard copy and by email, by 5 pm.</td>
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*Contingency Class Date: Friday, 9th February* Students are obligated to keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled.

**Course Reading**

The textbook for the course is Alison Theaker, ed., *The Public Relations Handbook* (5th edition, 2016). The course and your assessments will draw on significant parts of the text and you should purchase the book from the University. You are also encouraged to consult as widely as possible the reading list posted on Blackboard: [http://learn.bu.edu](http://learn.bu.edu).

A supplementary text which you are strongly recommended to use if possible is D. Wilcox and B. Reber, *Public Relations Writing and Media Techniques*, Pearson (2016), which along with the Theaker book, is on reserve in the library as reference works. You can use them there, but not take them out.

**ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

**Classes**

All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, seminar, and field trip in order to fulfil 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 more than one day. In this situation students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor’s note as soon as possible). The Authorised Absence Approval Request Form is available from: [http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester/](http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester/)

**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 (first day of sickness):** If a student is too ill to attend class, the student must phone the BU London Student Affairs Office (who will in turn contact the student’s lecturer).

- **Illness (multiple days):** If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must call into the BU London Student Affairs Office each day the student is ill. Students must also provide the Student Affairs office with a completed Authorised Absence Approval Form and a sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class.

- 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 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.

Religious Holidays

Boston University’s Office of the University Registrar states:

‘The University, in scheduling classes on religious holidays and observances, intends that students observing those traditions be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for cancelled classes to be rescheduled.’

Special Accommodations

Each student will need to contact the Office of Disability Services to request accommodations for the semester they are abroad. Students are advised by BU-ODS not to expect the same accommodations as they receive on campus.

BU London can only uphold special accommodations if we have received the appropriate documentation from the BU-ODS. We cannot accept letters from other universities/centres.

All disabilities need to be known to the ODS in Boston if they are to be used as a reason for requiring a change in conditions, i.e. reduced internship hours or special accommodations for the internship schedule.

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 be required to meet with the Associate Director for Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalised.

Grading

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

Final grades awarded by the tutor are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorized absences.