



## **Boston University Study Abroad**

London

### **Planning and Strategy in British Public Relations**

**COM CM 413 (Core course)**

#### **Course Aims**

This course 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, identifying and applying major concepts used in the social sciences to explain individual and collective human behaviour in a public relations context.
- 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.

#### **Alignment with HUB outcomes**

This class links to three key HUB outcomes:

*Scientific and Social Inquiry: Social Inquiry 1*

‘Students will identify and apply major concepts used in the social sciences to explain individual and collective human behaviour’

In class, relevant PR theories concerning stakeholders and publics will be analysed. In the assessment, you will be required to identify which publics are most important to your

organization's public relations, research them using both primary and secondary research, through interviews, surveys, databases, etc., and focus on one or two specific target publics to analyse for their plan. You will make use of R. Freeman's stakeholder theory, as well as JE Grunig and FC Repper's theories of latent, aware and active publics. In your plan you will be required to apply A. Mendelow's stakeholder mapping grid to the organization's relevant publics.

#### *Communication: Digital/Multimedia Expression*

Public relations now rely heavily on all types of digital media, particularly social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and other new tools.

1. Students will be able to craft and deliver responsible, considered and well-structured arguments using media and modes of expression appropriate to the situation.  
You will be required to make recommendations, and develop sample executions, to make a case for a client to adopt your ideas, in writing and in appropriate media for an oral presentation.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the capabilities of various communication technologies and be able to use these technologies ethically and effectively.'
3. In recommending and executing PR tactics, you will develop an understanding of how technological tools are used strategically and ethically by PR practitioners to achieve objectives.
4. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of visual communication

In addition, you will write and design specific messages to be delivered in the appropriate traditional media as well as digital media, including searching for, evaluating, and adapting appropriate visual images.

#### *Intellectual Toolkit: Creativity/Innovation*

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of creativity as a learnable, iterative process of imagining new possibilities that involve risk-taking, use of multiple strategies, and reconceiving in response to feedback, and will be able to identify individual and institutional factors that promote and inhibit creativity.'
2. Roger von Oech's concepts of the four stages of the creative process will be analysed in class, and form the basis for the structure of the PR plan assessment.
3. To make recommendations to your client, you will be required to evaluate the nature of the organization you have chosen, based on their previous PR campaigns: Are they creative? Do they try out innovative strategies or stick to the tried and true? Do they make use of new tactics, for example, the latest social media platforms, or only traditional media?
4. Students will be able to exercise their own potential for engaging in creative activity by conceiving and executing original work either alone or as part of a team.'
5. This will be an individual assignment, although you will be sharing information in class. In your assessment, you will be required to come up with a creative strategy to address one of the issues facing the organization, and, in addition, recommend tactics to implement the strategy, and create one or more of these tactics, for example, a news release, a series of Tweets, mock ups of brochures and/or posters, etc.

## Additional Course Objectives

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

1. Explain how businesses, governments and charities in Great Britain use public relations strategically;
2. Compare and contrast the British public relations industry with the American and European public relations industries;
3. Analyse and critique the theories which underpin public relations and the contexts in which it operates, in both Great Britain and the United States;
4. Apply public relations theories to real life British case studies and organizations;
5. Evaluate different public relations strategies employed by British organizations, including their use of digital media to achieve communication objectives; and
6. Create and develop strategies for selected British organizations and plan and execute tactics, including digital media, to implement these strategies.

## Grading

The following Boston University table explains the grading system that is used by most faculty members on Boston University's Study Abroad London Programmes.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Honour Points</u>	<u>Usual %</u>
A	4.0	93-100
A-	3.7	89-92
B+	3.3	85-88
B	3.0	81-84
B-	2.7	77-80
C+	2.3	73-76
C	2.0	69-72
C-	1.7	65-68
D	1.0	60-64
F	0.0	Unmarked

## Grading Criteria

**'Incomplete'** or **I** grades are not permitted because of the obvious difficulty in making up missed work once the student has left the country. All work must be completed on time. We also do not allow **'Audits'** (AU), **'Withdrawals'** (W), or **'Pass/Fail'** (P) grades.

The grades reflect the quality of the work. Lecturers and students should use the following criteria for an understanding of what each grade means.

**A** This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

**A-** Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.

**B+, B, B-** This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

**C+, C, C-** Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range.

Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a C grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student's own work except where properly cited.

**D** A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

**F** The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

- Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- So poorly written as to defy understanding
- So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism (see following section in Academic Conduct Code)

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and policies on plagiarism. This can be accessed via Blackboard Learn: <http://learn.bu.edu>

*\* Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.*

## **Attendance Policies**

### **Classes**

All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend every class session, seminar, and field trip 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:*

The Authorised Absence Approval Request Form is available through the Academic Affairs section of the BU London Personal Page: <https://fm.bu-london.co.uk/fmi/webd/>

### **Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form does not guarantee an authorised absence**

Students who expect in advance to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form ten working days in advance of the class date.

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 notify Academic Affairs as soon as possible by submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form in advance of the class. If it is the student's first absence of the semester (from any class) a doctor's note is not required.

**Illness (multiple days):** If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must complete an Authorised Absence Approval Request Form and a sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class. Once well enough, the student will need to meet with Academic Affairs.

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 Academic Affairs 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 Disability & Access Services to request accommodations for the semester they are abroad. Students are advised by BU-DAS 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-DAS. We cannot accept letters from other universities/centres.

All disabilities need to be known to the DAS 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 Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have their final grade penalised.