



MAS 389

Public Relations Theories

S1 Day 2014

Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

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Credit points

3

Prerequisites

6cp at 200 level

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit is a critical introduction to the theory and practice of public relations (PR). In this unit, you will be asked to explore the dominant perceptions of PR. At the same time, you will investigate its presence in our everyday life. Various theories and critiques of PR and an exploration of the relationship between PR and the media and other stakeholders will occupy the first half of the unit. In the second half, we will examine specific PR contexts, including corporate, government, NGOs, international relations, internal communications, and crisis communication. At a practical level, you will be required to write a media release and to justify your rationale in a class presentation. Overall, the course will enable you to be informed about the role that PR plays in our social, political and cultural environments. It will also help develop strong conceptual and analytical foundations as well as creative and presentation skills necessary to design a PR campaign in the next unit, MAS390, in preparation for a career in public communication.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Demonstrate knowledge of the role and place of PR in contemporary society

Understand, evaluate and critique the principles and theories of public relations

Present and debate your own ideas confidently to a group

Exhibit high level English writing skills in academic and professional forms
Construct a media release that shows your ability to apply knowledge, analyse issues and solve a problem in a creative way that is understandable to others

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Write media release</u>	30%	4pm, Friday 11 April (Week 6)
<u>Presentation on media release</u>	10%	From Week 3
<u>Write-up of class presentation</u>	10%	One week after presentation
<u>Essay</u>	40%	4pm Friday 6 June (Week 12)
<u>Participation</u>	10%	Ongoing

Write media release

Due: **4pm, Friday 11 April (Week 6)**

Weighting: **30%**

You will prepare a media release on a social, political or commercial development/issue of your choice. It should be both newsworthy and meet the perceived objectives of the client. Your release will target a specific journalist and/or media outlet.

Choose an existing organisation, possibly one you have connections with (as employee or volunteer), research it and then write a media release on a realistic development/issue for that organisation. The organisation must be real and the development/issue you are writing about must be realistic, however it must not have taken place already.

Your media release should reflect your understanding of the organisation, the complexities of the development/issue and why it is relevant for your targeted audience.

A media release is a professional piece of writing. It has a strict format and should be written at a level acceptable to the media: its construction, content and creativity are important and should exhibit high level English writing skills.

A comprehensive FAQ sheet, an assignment checklist and a media release template will be posted on iLearn. Please consult these important documents.

Length: 2 pages maximum plus rationale cover page.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand, evaluate and critique the principles and theories of public relations
- Exhibit high level English writing skills in academic and professional forms

- Construct a media release that shows your ability to apply knowledge, analyse issues and solve a problem in a creative way that is understandable to others

Presentation on media release

Due: **From Week 3**

Weighting: **10%**

You must relate the relevance of the issue you are covering in your media release to an aspect of the coursework and present on it to the class. You are required to find at least one academic journal article or book reference that relates to the topic in addition to the reader.

In a brief presentation (5 minutes), you will attempt to persuade your tutorial group on an issue directly relevant to your media release in a way that relates to the theory covered in the course. Your tutor will stop you if your presentation exceeds five minutes.

A comprehensive FAQ sheet and a Tips 'n' Hints sheet will be posted on iLearn.

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Write-up of class presentation

Due: **One week after presentation**

Weighting: **10%**

This is a formal write-up of the rationale behind your media release which was covered in your class presentation. It should include any feedback you received from audience. You should present your ideas clearly and succinctly. It is due a week after your presentation (ie at your next tutorial) and should be referenced. Length: maximum 750 words.

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Essay

Due: **4pm Friday 6 June (Week 12)**

Weighting: **40%**

You are expected to conduct a fair degree of independent research, draw on relevant readings beyond the reader and beyond to demonstrate a broad understanding of the issues relevant to the essay question. You will be rewarded for: demonstrating critical thinking, drawing your own conclusions, originality, correct vocabulary, grammar and spelling, clean layout and accurate referencing. Length: 1500 words.

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Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **10%**

All tutorials are compulsory and you must be an active participant. Attendance registers will be taken and if you miss more than two tutorials you have to submit a medical certificate. Please note that attendance does not constitute participation. Marks for participation will be based on: punctuality, preparation and familiarity with readings, actively taking part in discussions and group activities and asking well-thought out questions. Failure to prepare for tutorials will result in forfeiture of this assessment component.

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Delivery and Resources

Technology

Online units can be accessed at: <http://ilearn.mq.edu.au/>. All lectures will be recorded on echo and are accessible on ilearn.

PC and Internet access are required. Basic computer skills (e.g., internet browsing) and skills in word processing are also a requirement.

Please consult teaching staff for any further, more specific requirements.

Lecture times

The lecture will be held every week on Wednesday at 2pm in W5A T1. It is strongly recommended that all students attend. Tutorials follow on Thursdays and Fridays. You will be advised of your tutorial time and location.

Required and recommended texts and/or materials

All required readings are in the MAS389 Public Relations Theories: Unit Reader available from the Co-op bookshop. Two copies will be placed in the Reserve section of the library.

Please read the readings each week in advance of the lecture and tutorial. Additional resources that may be useful or interesting to you will be posted on iLearn. This means that new resources will be made available to you as they come to hand.

Useful textbooks include:

Chia, J. and Synnott, G. (Eds). 2012. *An Introduction to Public Relations and Communication Management*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Johnston, J., & Zawawi, C. (Eds). 2009. *Public relations: Theory and Practice*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Macnamara, J. 2012. *Public relations: theories, practices, critiques*. Sydney: Pearson Australia.

L'Etang, J. 2008. *Public Relations: concepts, practice and critique*. London: Sage Publications.

Unit Schedule

Week 1	<p>Lecture: Introduction and outline of assessments</p> <p>No tutorial in Week 1.</p> <p>For readings for every week, refer to the unit reader and to ilearn.</p>
Week 2	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: Defining PR and its history</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is public relations? Is it an independent discipline or a sub-section of something else?• What are the differences between PR, marketing and advertising?• What is the general perception about PR?• What are your perceptions about PR and those who practice it?

Week 3	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: PR and media: symbiosis?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the relationship between PR and the media?• How should PR people work most effectively with journalists and vice versa?• The media release: what is its structure, important characteristics?• How have new technologies influenced communication with journalists?
Week 4	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: Publics and public opinion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is a public?• What is the process by which public opinion is formed?• What is the difference between publics and target audiences?• Why have publics been so important in PR?• How are publics categorised?
Week 5	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: Persuasion, propaganda & spin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Propaganda and persuasion theory - how helpful are they for a PR practitioner?• What is the role of emotion in persuasion?
Week 6	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: Research - for practitioner and student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why is research important for PR practitioners?• What are the most useful forms?• What research should be undertaken by academics?
Week 7	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: Ethical behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the difference between ethics and morals?• How does this apply to the practice of PR?• Self-regulation vs industry regulation
Week 8	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: PR and new technologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How have new technologies influenced PR practice and theory?• How successfully are they being used?• What are some of the ways in which social media is being used to improve crisis communication?

Week 9	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: PR in a crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the role of PR in crisis management?• What is the difference between issues management and crisis management?• What are the principles of good crisis management?• How does the way a crisis is handled affect an organisation's or individual's reputation?• Consider some of the crises covered by the media in the last year. How were they managed?• Is political PR a case of ongoing crisis management?
Week 10	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: PR and government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How important is PR in the democratic process?• What role do media advisors play in this election campaign?• What is the role of PR in the relationships between government and businesses and NGOs?• What is the role of lobbying?
Week 11	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: International PR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would you define international PR?• Are there differences in approaches between global PR consultancies and international NGOs?• What is the difference between how domestic and international publics are viewed by an international PR strategist?• How MAS390 students can get involved with PACE International.
Week 12	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: Internal PR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is internal PR?• Is good external PR dependent on good internal communication?• How can the organisation benefit from good internal comms?
Week 13	<p>Lecture & discussion themes: Unit review and the way forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have your perceptions about PR and PR practitioners changed since the beginning of semester? Why/why not?• Does PR deserve its bad reputation as spin doctoring?• Has the subject increased your interest in studying further in PR, taking an internship and furthering a career in comms?

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate knowledge of the role and place of PR in contemporary society
- Understand, evaluate and critique the principles and theories of public relations
- Present and debate your own ideas confidently to a group

Assessment tasks

- Write media release
- Presentation on media release
- Write-up of class presentation

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate knowledge of the role and place of PR in contemporary society
- Understand, evaluate and critique the principles and theories of public relations
- Present and debate your own ideas confidently to a group
- Exhibit high level English writing skills in academic and professional forms

Assessment tasks

- Write media release
- Presentation on media release
- Write-up of class presentation

- Essay
- Participation

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

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Assessment tasks

- Write media release
- Presentation on media release
- Write-up of class presentation
- Essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

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- Present and debate your own ideas confidently to a group
- Exhibit high level English writing skills in academic and professional forms
- Construct a media release that shows your ability to apply knowledge, analyse issues and solve a problem in a creative way that is understandable to others

Assessment tasks

- Write media release
- Presentation on media release
- Write-up of class presentation
- Essay

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Exhibit high level English writing skills in academic and professional forms
- Construct a media release that shows your ability to apply knowledge, analyse issues and solve a problem in a creative way that is understandable to others

Assessment tasks

- Write media release
- Presentation on media release

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Exhibit high level English writing skills in academic and professional forms
- Construct a media release that shows your ability to apply knowledge, analyse issues and solve a problem in a creative way that is understandable to others

Assessment tasks

- Write media release
- Presentation on media release
- Write-up of class presentation
- Essay

- Participation

Changes since First Published

Date	Description
16/01/2014	The Prerequisites was updated.