



## **POLM 5009: Media Relations**

**NOTE:** POLM 5009 is normally taught in two sections (A, B). While the course content (readings, lectures, assignments) is the same across both sections, specific due dates vary and are not included in this online version of the course outline. Registered students will have access to the more detailed course outlines — which will also include week-by-week assigned readings and A/V — via Brightspace.

### **I. Course description:**

In this course, we will explore a range of issues related to the theory and practice of media relations in a Canadian political context. We'll take a look at the current state of news media in Canada; discuss the different types of media, how they work, and what they need; explore how political staff can best work with media; and examine the practical realities and challenges of media interviews. The course will conclude with a simulated news conference, giving you an opportunity to put what you've learned into practice.

The course will be taught in a hybrid format that will rely heavily on self-directed learning, combined with weekly classes (held in person or via Zoom, depending on the section). In addition to the work required to complete the assignments, you can expect to read (on average) 30 pages a week for this course and spend up to half an hour each week watching pre-recorded content (this will vary week to week). In three of our six classes, we will be joined by current and former journalists, experienced press secretaries and communications staffers, and seasoned media trainers, giving you direct access to experts with real-world experience in the issues surrounding media relations.

### **II. Preclusions**

None.

### III. Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this six-week course, successful students will have demonstrated an understanding of issues related to media relations and its practice in Canada, and demonstrated their ability to:

- Critically evaluate media relations strategies used in and around government. This includes the ability to identify effective/successful media relations efforts, and the ability to reflect on how lessons learned from these efforts can be applied to future work.
- Conduct independent research that expands on the ideas and themes explored in the course. This includes the ability to identify, assess, and defend new sources of information, and the ability to engage with a variety of sources, including the guest speakers invited to our class meetings.
- Collaboratively prepare communications products. This includes the ability to identify a communications opportunity, draft well-written products (some of which will be graded), and provide useful feedback on others' work.
- Deliver effective presentations. This includes the ability to understand and apply principles discussed in assigned readings, the ability to make persuasive arguments and share information in a concise way, and the ability to respond thoughtfully to questions posed by others in a simulated news conference.
- Act in a supportive and professional manner. This includes the ability to provide constructive and meaningful feedback on other students' contributions and observations, and a demonstrated commitment to submitting all work before the assigned deadlines.

### IV. Texts:

- **REQUIRED:**

Carney, W. W., Babiuk, C., & LaVigne, M. H. (2019). *In the News: The Practice of Media Relations in Canada* (3rd ed.). University of Alberta Press. — \$43.99 for paperback edition

McCarten, J. (2021). *The Canadian Press Stylebook: A Guide for Writers and Editors* (19th ed.). The Canadian Press. — \$39.50 for paperback edition

- **RECOMMENDED:**

McCarten, J. (2022). *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* (23<sup>rd</sup> ed.). The Canadian Press. — \$27.50 for paperback edition

## V. Course calendar:

A range of topics will be covered in this six-week course:

Week	Topic
Week 1	Introduction / State of Canadian Media
Week 2	Media: Who They Are and What They Need
Week 3	Political Staff: What You Can (And Can't) Do
Week 4	Interviews: Basic Principles
Week 5	Interviews: Advanced Practices
Week 6	Simulated News Conference (Class Presentations)

## VI. Evaluation:

A range of assignments will be used to assess student performance and progress in the course. These include:

Assignment	Percentage	Due Date
Discussion Forum	15% Five posts, worth 3% each.	Weekly starting in Week 2
Media Analysis	25%	Due before Week 3 class
Media Materials	20%	Due before Week 5 class
Simulated News Conference	40% Grade will be based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• self assessment - 5%</li><li>• peer review - 5%</li><li>• instructor grade - 30%</li></ul>	Presentation groups must be selected before Week 2 class Presentations will take place during final (Week 6) class

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.