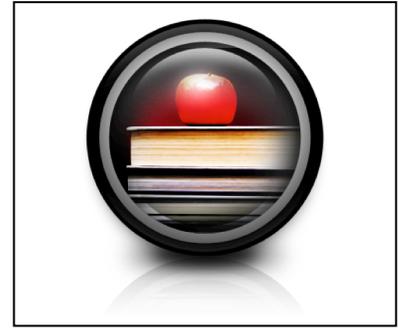**Course Syllabus DRAFT**
MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY
Department of Communication Studies

Graduate Project Seminar
(GPRL 6220.18) 08/05/2016-23/06/2016
Via Moodle & Collaborate (11-1 AST May 10, 24, June 14, 21)
(Final Project Presentations June 21.)

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Office hours: Any mutually acceptable time, by appointment; our meetings can be online or in-person.

Course Description

This is a required course for all students in the MPR program at MSVU. In consultation with me, and after discussion with fellow classmates, each student will design his/her own project. The project entails a sustained exploration of public relations and communication theory, research and practice. Students are expected to link theoretical and research ideas to existing practical contexts.

Course Goal

To provide an opportunity for the student to use historical and contemporary theoretical and research ideas to address a practical communication or public relations issue, problem or opportunity. This course is meant to tie together your MPR experience and learning.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have produced a substantive piece of scholarly and professional work that demonstrates an ability to make linkages between theory and practice. To that end, students will have:

- Constructed a proposal for a research project
- Explored an appropriate research method and methodology and articulated the rationale for this methodology, as well as its limitations
- Written a research project that identifies links between theory and practice
- Provided reviews of research proposals and projects, including constructive feedback for peer researchers

- Developed recommendations for public relations practice and future research

Teaching and Learning Platform

This course employs a distance-learning format, which means that the entire course is available via Moodle, and Blackboard Collaborate. Every second week, we will have a Collaborate session that will enable us to have discussions simultaneously via distance. The idea is to use the technology available to us to build a dynamic learning community within this course. If you are unable to be present for a Collaborate session, you may view or listen to the recorded session online at your convenience. However, you should be aware that we learn from one another, and I will assume that what I say in these discussions will not need to be repeated to individual students. You will be expected to help one another through our Moodle fora.

Project Topics

In consultation with me, students will identify a project topic. The topic will consider the significance, importance, and relevance of theory and research for the field of public relations. Students must make a clearly-defined argument and support this in their writing. For the project, students may choose to critique existing practices (eg., organizational leadership from a feminist perspective), open up a new topic for consideration (eg., assess the potential for humanistic theory to develop an innovative applied research methods agenda in public relations practice), or apply theory to a particular situation (eg., draw upon Postman or Kellner to explore opportunities for communicating virtually with residents in rural Nova Scotia). I encourage students to choose projects that will not require an ethics review. That is, because of the shortened timeframe of this course, I suggest you consider projects that will not require research involving direct interaction with human subjects, and I will guide you to that end. *However*, the department's Research Ethics Committee is dedicated to assessing your proposal in a timely manner if your intended project necessitates working with humans.

Description of Final Piece

The project report should represent a substantive piece of scholarly and professional work that demonstrates your ability to make theory/research/practice links. This is NOT a thesis. More information on this piece can be found below.

Students will be expected to work independently, but gather with classmates to provide progress reports and to exchange ideas. To this end, I will assign working groups based on your research interests after our first Collaborate meeting (**May 10 at 11 am AST**).

Course Readings

Because each of your projects reflects your individual interests, I will recommend unique readings to each of you after we've exchanged project ideas. Shared readings will be posted to our Moodle page. Please share your knowledge with one another. Make recommendations to each other. Share appropriate resources.

Tasks and Deadlines

Task	Deadline
Introduce Yourself on Moodle forum	**May 9**
Attend Collaborate Session	**May 10** at 11 am AST
Participate in Moodle Fora	**May 10 - 23**
Begin Proposal Work	**May 11**
Upload Proposal for Peer Review	**May 20** by 8 am AST
Review Assigned Proposals	**May 20**
Upload Assigned Reviews Feedback	**May 22** by 8 am AST
Attend Collaborate Session	**May 24** at 11 am AST
Make Appropriate Changes to Work Plan Based on Peer/Professor Feedback	**May 24**
Participate in Moodle Fora	**May 24 – June 6**
Conduct Research	**May 24-31**
Upload Research Results and Preliminary Analysis for Peer Review	**June 10** by 8 am AST
Review Assigned Research Results and Preliminary Analysis	**June 10**
Upload Assigned Research Results and Preliminary Analysis Feedback	**June 12** by 8 am AST
Attend Collaborate Session	**June 14** at 11 am AST
Make Appropriate Changes to Research Results and Preliminary Analysis Based on Peer Feedback	**June 14**
Participate in Moodle Fora	**June 7 – June 20**
Begin Drafting Final Piece	**June 7**
Begin Preparing Presentation	**June 14**
Upload Final Piece	**June 21** by 11 am AST
Attend Final Collaborate Session for Presentations	**June 21 from 11 am AST**

Proposal (30% of final mark; late assignments will not be accepted)
By May 20 at 8:00 a.m. AST, students must submit a project proposal (not more than 1500 words) to me and their classmates via Moodle. The proposal should include a brief review of the relevant literature in order to put your project in context. It should also describe the method and theoretical approach that you intend to use to develop your project. State the main topic of your work, provide a rationale for the relevance or importance of your topic, outline the main elements or sections of your planned work, provide a schedule and offer a reference list that will inform your final piece. Please use the latest version of APA or Chicago (author-date) format (and reference style) for this and all other work in this class.

Peer Input and Review Sessions (30% of final mark; late assignments will not be accepted)
In the early stages of drafting, a peer review session can serve as a "think-tank" or issues brainstorming session to help guide the development of your project. As in professional environments, it can serve as a best practices and productivity function by facilitating the identification of best practice templates, document precedents or other resources that can improve the final product or deliverable. A peer review conducted closer to the deliverable date of a document serves as a quality assurance. *Please note that materials and documents will need to be delivered to class members and to me 48 hours before our input and review sessions. Your attendance during the Collaborate sessions is imperative for you and your peers to enjoy the benefits of peer review.*

Each student will provide a review of early drafts of the works developed by their colleagues. In this format, students will review up to three projects other than their own. I will assign you the work to review, and will expect you to provide quality, intellectually rigorous and useful reviews**. *I will not assign marks to your peer reviews: you do them, you get 30 points and if you don't do them, or I note that they are anything but excellent, I will deduct the appropriate amount of points.***

PLEASE NOTE: IT IS NOT YOUR PEERS' DUTY TO PROOFREAD. YOU MUST DO THIS BEFORE HANDING IN A DRAFT. IF YOU FAIL TO DO THIS, YOUR PEERS WILL BE GREATLY DISAPPOINTED.

In the spirit of learning from one another, the reviews will provide constructive feedback for the students who have developed these projects. They will also demonstrate an ability to critically assess research, identify potential challenges and opportunities in terms of project design and methodology, and comment on the quality and completeness of the literature review and the data analysis provided. A

feedback form will be provided in Moodle.

There will be two dates for Peer Review discussions: May 24 and June 14. Written feedback should be sent to me and to your peer **48 hours BEFORE** the scheduled discussion times. Please use the appropriate form for each step of the research process. These will be provided in Moodle. Please see above for deadline dates.

Final project and presentation (40% of final mark—30% report and 10% presentation). *Late assignments will not be accepted.*
At the end of the term (***June 21***), students will submit a final project report that will be no more than 15 pages in length, inclusive of references (12 pt. Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1" margins, APA or Chicago (author-date referencing style).

Please keep in mind that a project report is different from an academic paper. Both should be intellectually rigorous, but the audiences may be different. While differently presented, all Final Project Contents in this class will include the following:

Abstract
Keywords
T of C
Introduction
Literature Review
Research Objectives
Research Question(s)
Methodology –
        Methodolgy (the theoretical background of the chosen method)
        Methods
        Sample and sampling procedures
Findings
Conclusions
Appendices
References

Students will also present their project to peers and invited guests. Presentations are to be no longer than 15 minutes, via Collaborate. Please use not more than 10 slides, and keep professionalism in mind. This means that there should be little text on each slide, and that you keep in mind your audience. Communicate succinctly and thoroughly.

Evaluation

Evaluation for the proposal, peer input and reviews, and for the project is outlined above. A grading schema for the final project is provided at the end of this syllabus. Work that does not meet acceptable graduate level standards of writing, presentation and scholarly rigour will be returned, and you will be expected to rewrite and resubmit. You are expected to give as much as you take in this course. Together, we learn. But that means everyone must give 100%.

Please Note: if you want special consideration as a result of a conflict with a deadline, you must do so in 72 hours in advance of the relevant deadline.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE: DISCIPLINARY ACTION WILL BE TAKEN IF YOU plagiarize. You will fail this course and you will receive a note on your transcript. Plagiarism is presenting someone else's words or ideas obtained from any source, including the Internet, as though they were one's own. Specific offences include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Using copied material without enclosing that material in quotation marks and/or without appropriately acknowledging its source;
- Paraphrasing or summarizing the original wording too closely;
- Omitting acknowledgment of the source of paraphrases and summaries;
- Submitting work that has been written in full or in part by someone else;
- Submitting work you have submitted for credit in another course without acknowledging its source.

As required by the University, I am including the following for your information: University regulations on plagiarism and cheating and other academic offenses will be strictly enforced. These regulations including applicable procedures and penalties are detailed in the University Calendar and are posted on department notice boards and on the website at www.msvu.ca on the Current Students page under Academic Offenses.

The Department of Communication Studies Writing Competency Requirement

Correct use of language is one of the criteria included in the evaluation of all written assignments. Basic writing competency is required to pass this course. The obligation to meet the minimal standard lies with the student. If a faculty member determines that a student's basic writing competency falls below the minimum standard for the course, the student will fail the course.

Note: Because this is a graduate course, "basic writing competency" is expected to be at a graduate level. As noted above, "Work that does not meet acceptable graduate level standards of writing, presentation and scholarly rigour will be returned, and you will be expected to rewrite and resubmit."

Research Obligations

Students who conduct research involving human participants must have their research reviewed in accordance with the MSVU Policies and Procedures for Ethics Review of Research before starting the research. Check with me about proper procedure.

Students with Special Needs

Students who have a disability and who require academic accommodations must register with Accessibility Services as early as possible in order to receive accommodations (http://www.msvu.ca/en/home/studentservices/officeofstudentexperience/).

Statement on accommodation of religious observances

Requests for accommodation of specific religious or spiritual observance must be presented in writing to me within the first week of class.

Policy Against Sexual Assault

Mount Saint Vincent University has no tolerance for sexual assault. The Mount is committed to providing and maintaining a safe environment that promotes the dignity and well-being of the University community. The University has a strong tradition of social responsibility.

Final Project Rubric for Project Seminar Report

ATTRIBUTE	EMERGING C	COMPETENT B	EXEMPLARY A
RESEARCH & INNOVATION	Little research applied to project; limited knowledge shown; no evidence of solid research; infeasible approach applied.	Issue explored with curiosity; adequate knowledge from variety of sources displayed; strategies reflect innovation and creativity.	Knowledge base displays scope, thoroughness, and quality.
ANALYSIS & CRITICAL THINKING	Limited analysis; no evidence of critical thinking; no evidence of the investigative spirit	Identifies potential issues; adequate use of historical and contemporary theoretical ideas; addresses practical communication or pr issues or opportunities.	Uses critical thinking to pose and respond to questions. Identifies potential issues and mitigation strategies.
COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY and CREATIVITY	Ideas are not well-articulated; lacks engagement with audience; lack of strategic direction provided. Grammar and/or style is not at an appropriate level.	Communication and research objectives clear but loses direction. Grammar and/or style is almost there, but still needs attention.	Project clearly identifies and communicates solid research in communication and public relations. Well-written. Professional-quality.