

# **Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Mass Communication with Public Relations (Top-up)**

## **Module Descriptions**

### **Level 5**

#### **Cinema and Society**

In this module, you will critically examine the relationship between United States filmic institutions (films and industrial bodies – hereafter "cinema") and different social contexts, for example, changes to the Hollywood Studio System (and the birthing of the "New Hollywood"), cinema's engagement with issues surrounding race, gender and sexuality, and cinema's responses to war and global trauma. The module explores many of the ways cinema has engaged with key societal concerns, taught through lectures, demonstrations (film screenings) and student-led seminars.

You will be required to read and reflect on specific theoretical and empirical academic work by leading scholars and commentators and, using your analytical and interpretive skills, relate this work to the issues raised in class and by the accompanying film screenings.

The module is assessed by a 3,000-word essay which is designed to test your knowledge of film history and industry (one of the world's major mass communications industries), to evidence a sophisticated understanding of the issues under scrutiny and your ability to work to a deadline.

Ultimately, the module asks you to consider:

- What can cinema tell us about history?
- What can cinema tell us about ourselves?

What is the significance of studying cinema as a mass communications industry, an outlet for personal expression and as a political tool?

#### **Cultural Identities on Screen**

The module focuses on the televisual representation and articulation of cultural identities in Britain and the United States. The module will look at how ethnicity, gender, and national and regional identities are constructed through an examination of different genres and areas of screen media, such as comedy, current affairs and drama.

The module also explores issues such as class, gender and racial stereotypes, visibility of minority groups and integration. Throughout the module, you will also consider the

function of television, considering what its role might be in the construction of cultural identities.

### **Current Affairs in Public Relations**

This module aims to develop your understanding of the relationship between contemporary issues and public relations (PR), and how both shape each other. You will learn to analyse current affairs and issues in PR in the light of contemporary PR theory.

You are encouraged to develop a broader knowledge of issues and developments in PR by investigating the issues raised by the tutor and your peers during the seminar sessions. You are expected to read widely in PR theory and keep abreast of current affairs and contemporary issues affecting practice.

### **Media Cultures**

This module explores the major trajectories of communication technology, cultural readings of communication technologies and their impact in terms of business, cultural human space, economics, human communication, popular culture and technological progression.

This module will take a case study approach to media cultures which will resonate explicitly with examples which are central to the daily lives of young people, to explore both these and wider issues of media and cultural engagement. Such examples, including global consumer culture, the 21st century music industry and the online world of social media, can be applied to more unfamiliar media cultures.

The second part of the module takes a historical turn. Moving from the contemporary to the historical gives the opportunity to reflect on the current historical moment and how this is linked to longer trajectories in the development of media cultures.

### **Media Dissertation**

This module involves the researching and writing of an 8,000 - 10,000-word media-related dissertation on a subject of your own choosing. You should attend a series of mandatory lecture/workshop sessions in which the fundamental requirements of preparing and researching a dissertation will be examined and explained. These sessions will be spread across Semester 1 and Semester 2.

In Semester 1, you will develop your initial dissertation proposal up to the point where you are ready to start writing the dissertation itself. You will develop your information-retrieval skills, familiarise yourself with your chosen subject, find solutions to any problems arising out of your research design, consider the significance of any ethical

constraints, formulate your principal research question and determine the methodology you will use. You are required to complete a 2,000-word dissertation plan as part of your progress (however, the module grade will be entirely assessed against your final dissertation).

In Semester 2, you will develop and amend the ideas in your dissertation plan, carry out further research, prepare and write the final dissertation. Supervision will continue to be provided through regular meetings with your supervisor.

### **Media Events**

Following a case study approach, you will investigate the idea of media events in historical, conceptual and organisational terms. The module will explore how particular events (eg. media festivals and award ceremonies) are developed, structured and organised. The aim is to consider how we, as scholars of media and culture, might conceptualise events and, in doing so, gain a clearer understanding of their dynamics, practices and their impact on the industry and society.

In this way, the module will illustrate the key ways in which specific media events have been framed in scholarship and how these ideas might begin to be applied in the real world. As such, the module encourages you to develop a critical response to media events and, in doing so, reflect upon their broader cultural, historical and socio-political significance. The lectures will introduce key concepts that will be explored in the seminars.

The main part of each seminar will focus upon group tasks and discussion of the theme, specific event or set texts. Seminar discussions are also intended to develop your communication skills and your ability to develop and respond to ideas in a collaborative environment.

### **Media Industries**

You will examine mass communications in the context of contemporary practices, developments, trajectories and trends that have developed and are developing within contemporary mass communication industries.

The module takes a distinctive pedagogic approach in that the core of the module consists of three team-taught and research-led "symposiums" that address a specific controversy, debate or development within the field of mass communication industries (advertising, broadcast, digital) and enable you to acquire a critical, multi-perspective and evaluative grounding in the issues shaping such industries.

Complementing and reinforcing the media staff-led symposiums will be a series of lectures provided by industry guest speakers (from advertising, digital/web companies, radio and television) that will provide practical and state-of-the-art insights into key issues

underpinning mass communication operations and developments. Finally, two workshop sessions will be based on you undertaking personal research into salient issues (the front-facing components of Apple stores, the “brand” and customer typology) and research-informed reflexive approaches to social networking technologies.

## **Media Methodologies**

The purpose of this module is to introduce you to key theories and approaches employed when researching media and provide you with the practical skills needed to undertake major independent research in your final year (Media Dissertation).

In the first half of this module, you will engage with the key processes involved in designing an academic research project, undertaking the research work and analysis, and presenting the results. In the process, you will be shown how to position your work in relation to an intellectual context, construct research questions that are practical and realistic, implement appropriate methodologies, write research proposals and structure longer written projects such as dissertations.

The second half of the module will put research approaches in focus – academic experts will provide sessions on methodological approaches such as analysing media texts and archival research.

## **Promotional Writing**

In this semi-practical module, you will be introduced to a range of writing skills applicable to professional practice in promotional writing, focusing on marketing materials and press releases. The module aims to develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the practices of promotional writing, the contexts and practices of professional writing, and brand promotion and engagement with the audience through text.

At the end of the module, you will be able to demonstrate applied writing skills in the production of promotional materials, understand the nature and purpose of a range of promotional techniques, understand the role of writing in the management of brand, corporate and product identities, and understand the relationship between persuasive text, the audience and the medium.

This module will also enhance your knowledge of promotional writing techniques and give you the skills to consider how to best produce text within promotional materials. All these outcomes are applicable to a future within the advertising or public relations industries.

## **Public Relations in Context**

This module aims to develop your understanding of the principles of PR theory and concepts so you can apply them to real-world PR strategies. You will develop your skills in presenting and working in teams. The module will enable you to utilise a case study approach, involving the analysis of a PR scenario.

You will be briefed about the case study, analyse it in teams and deliver an assessed pitch for a contract. The module aims to develop skill sets that are key to working in the PR industry, and which will be invaluable in terms of future employability.

## **Researching Audiences**

This module will introduce you to several things. First, it will give you a grounding in some of the main recent traditions for thinking about and researching media audiences, and the historical contexts of these, the rise of the European cultural studies approach to audiences, the American mass communications approaches, the reception studies tradition and the growing interdisciplinary field of fan studies. What links all these approaches is an emphasis on the contexts which shape how audiences engage with and respond to different media and cultural products.

The module will also ensure you are experienced at reading and evaluating original audience and reception research. You are required to read in detail the actual empirical work, in order to think about and understand the processes undertaken, and assess what distinguishes good/strong from poor/weak research.

Finally, alongside tackling the intellectual issues of audience research, the module aims to do something quite unusual – to give you an experience of the processes involved and the challenges encountered, by giving you a chance to carry out your own small piece of audience research. This has to be small-scale and preliminary, in order to fit it within the confines of one module over one semester. But, working in a small group, you will design, conduct and compare some different ways of learning about audience responses.

## **Level 6**

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