



MPPR-755-02: DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Tuesday, 5:20 pm – 7:50 p.m. | Fall 2015

Instructor: Mark Stojack

Downtown campus, Room C220

- Office hours are by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will provide students with a general understanding and working knowledge of digital communications strategies and tactics for the modern business environment. Students will learn to approach various communications challenges in an integrated fashion by leveraging digital channels to augment and enhance traditional communications and marketing tactics. The course will survey emerging and existing technologies and teach students how to best use these communication channels and interact with online communities. The class will highlight specific digital case studies, encourage hands on participation and offer an analysis of effective online communication and strategies. Students will leave the course with an increased knowledge of and hands-on familiarity with the practical applications of digital communications and how these lead to success.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will:

- Learn how to analyze complex communications challenges, create digital solutions and provide strategic counsel.
- Develop comprehensive strategies designed to best integrate digital tactics into traditional communications plans.
- Gain an in depth understanding of the modern digital media landscape and evolving communications practices in an effort to gain strategic competitive advantage for organizations and in professional brand development.
- Develop a familiarity of effective online tools and methods such as narrative definition, content development, online community building, engagement strategy, search engine optimization (SEO), monitoring, measurement, interpreting analytics, mobile communications, video, etc.
- Review actual case studies of effective digital and integrated campaigns to identify best practices and provide relevant examples to draw parallels for coursework.

REQUIRED READING



A collection of curated articles, reports and free online newsletters will be supplied to the students at the beginning of class and throughout the semester. No book purchases are required.

Beyond the readings provided, I encourage you to read/follow the listed content outlets on a regular basis:

Mashable (<http://mashable.com>)

TechCrunch (<http://techcrunch.com>)

eMarketer (<http://www.emarketer.com/Articles>)

AdAge (<http://adage.com>)

AdWeek (<http://adweek.com>)

Digital Buzz Blog (<http://digitalbuzzblog.com>)

MediaBistro (<http://mediabistro.com>)

Buzzfeed (<http://buzzfeed.com>)

Reddit (<http://reddit.com>)

ATTENDANCE

As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). **Absences for classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade.** If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

Punctual attendance is critical. If you have to miss a class – family emergency, medical emergency or other act of God – you must let the instructors know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off all cell phones, pagers or other communication devices while in class. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions. What happens in class stays in class unless you receive permission from the instructor to share something.



Teamwork

Teamwork will be an important part of this class. You will find that the ability to collaborate will assist you tremendously as you rely on your classmates to brainstorm ideas on presentations, papers, final projects, etc. There will be several opportunities to engage in team activities throughout the semester that will benefit the entire class.

Common Courtesies

The use of mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet devices in class is prohibited unless specifically related to current lessons or coursework. Otherwise please turn off these devices. On occasion we will have guest speakers. They will certainly appreciate this, as well. We will have a break during class when you can check messages. During class, opinions are welcomed and viewpoints are encouraged as long as expressed constructively and respectfully. You are welcome to bring food or drink to the classroom.

Contacting Me

I do not hold regular office hours, however, I am available by appointment throughout the week. The best way to reach me is by my Georgetown email address (see directory) or by cell 312.613.1971. I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are six graded assignments for this class:

Digital Diagnosis (Assignment #1): Select a company or organization with which you have some familiarity. Explore the organization through all various available digital channels (.com, social, offline, video, 3rd party content providers, etc.). Conduct a top-line evaluation to identify what is working well and what could be improved upon. Provide an informed point-of-view on the how this organization might fully leverage digital relative to their mission or goal. Consider areas of tonality, user experience, content breadth, digital footprint and overall impact.

Key Insights (Assignment #2): Students will be given a client input brief that outlines a communications objective, goal, target audience. Students will be asked to identify three key insights that are the building blocks of a communications strategy.

Brand Framework (Assignment #3): Leveraging the tools learned in class, each student will develop a brand framework for a selected organization. The brand framework will highlight an organization's 1) unmet user need; 2) real marketing/communication challenge and; 3) true brand capability. This framework allows an organization to better define its role in a crowded digital communications space.

Creative Brief (Assignment #4): Students will be asked to write a creative brief for an assigned client communications challenge.



Mini Presentation (Assignment #5): A mini class presentation will be assigned during the semester. Assignments will include research and analysis into a culturally relevant and timely topic (people, trends, platforms, news, etc.) specific to digital communications. Presentations of 5-10 minutes each followed by a brief Q&A session.

Final Project Presentation (Assignment #6): The culmination of your learning will be a final presentation, the specific details of which will be shared midway through the semester. The class will be divided into 4 teams of 5. Each team will be responsible for producing a presentation no more than 60 minutes in length followed by a brief Q&A to be presented in the final 2 classes. The presentation will be evaluated on each team's ability to demonstrate course-long comprehension of the materials presented, as well as being an articulate, compelling, and professional client-ready presentation.

Class Participation

Your participation score will be based on conversation in class, as well as your contribution to Q&A sessions for your classmate's presentations.

Assignment Point Structure:

20 Points – Digital Diagnosis Assignment

- 10 points = Quality of audit and analysis
- 10 points = Clarity of point of view

5 Points – Key Insights Assignment

- 3 points = Quality and originality of insights
- 2 points = Quality of storytelling

20 Points – Brand Framework Assignment

- 10 points = Quality and originality of insights
- 10 points = Demonstrated comprehension and execution of key components

5 Points – Creative Brief

- 3 points = Clarity of strategy
- 2 points = Succinct and actionable brief

5 Points – Mini Class Presentation

- 3 points = Clear, relevant point of view connected to course material

40 points - Final Project Presentation

- 10 Points = Research & relevant insights



- 10 Points = Strategic thinking
- 10 Points = Creativity and originality, plus feasibility of implementation
- 10 Points = Overall presentation delivery & QA preparedness

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

- 20 points = Digital Diagnosis
- 20 points = Brand Framework
- 5 points = Key Insights
- 5 points = Creative Brief
- 5 points = Mini Class Presentation
- 5 points = Class Participation
- 40 points = Final Project Presentation

Total = 100 points

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.**

A	100-93	B-	82.99-80
A-	92.99-90	C	79.99-70
B+	89.99-88	F	69.99-0
B	87.99-83		

The instructors will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- Library Resources for MPPR-505
<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/researchcourseguides>
<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/prcc>
- MPS Writing Resource Program
202-687-4246
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu>
- Academic Resource Center
202-687-8354 | arc@georgetown.edu
<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>



- Counseling and Psychiatric Services
202-687-6985
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>
- Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action (IDEAA)
(202) 687-4798
<https://ideaa.georgetown.edu/>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in the workplace, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of



guest speakers may require some shifting of the agenda. The instructors will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (Tuesday, 9/8)

Course Overview & Building Blocks of Digital

Overview of class expectations, assignments and introductions. Understanding the foundational elements of the digital landscape and what the future might hold.

WEEK 2 (Tuesday, 9/16)

How Digital Drives Our Economy

Investigate how brands (including political campaigns and celebrities) can survive and adapt to the changes brought on by digital.

WEEK 3 (Tuesday, 9/23)

Social Media/Content Marketing Overview

Overview of key social media channels (including blogs, publishing outlets) with a deep dive into existing & future trends.

Assignment for 9/30: Digital Diagnosis

WEEK 4 (Tuesday, 9/30)

Mobile Overview

Overview of how mobile plays a role in the digital ecosystem, including technologies, user behavior, advertising, marketing integration, and future trends.

Guest Speaker: Dan Hou, VP of Strategy

Assignment for 10/6: Key Insights

WEEK 5 (Tuesday, 10/6)

Understanding Your Audience & User Behavior

Demonstrating how to apply user behavior and audience personas to the development of amazing digital experiences, we will use a case study to illustrate these best practices.

Guest instructor to be announced.

WEEK 6 (Tuesday, 10/13)

Creating a Brand Framework

An organization's brand framework and positioning is paramount to creating a successful presence online. In this class we will learn how to devise a solid brand framework that will highlight an organization's 1) unmet user need, 2) real marketing/communication challenge and, 3) true brand capability.

Possible Guest Speaker

Assignment for 10/20: Brand Framework



WEEK 7 (Tuesday, 10/20)

Creating the Killer Creative Brief

Experience some of the world's best "designed" brands and marketing campaigns; explore how tone, voice, and visual appeal can propel a brand forward, all starting with a creative brief.

Final Project: Teams & assignment announced.

WEEK 8 (Tuesday, 10/27)

The "Big Idea" (Class held at Hugu: 875 N Street, NW. #205)

Review groundbreaking and smart integrated campaigns through a series of case studies.

Explore how successful "creative" ideas come to life.

Assignment for 11/3: Creative Brief

WEEK 9 (Tuesday, 11/3)

Global Trends

Global trends and evolution of communications in an ever-changing digital landscape. We'll discuss 5 global trends in digital communications and how to apply them in an efficient and effective manner.

Guest instructor to be announced.

WEEK 10 (Tuesday, 11/10)

Communications Planning

Understand planning of channel mix, content creation, curation, and influencer outreach. Also explore how effective community management is supported by well-articulated editorial guidelines, a mix of social listening tools, and proper cadence of content delivery. Also review elements of search engine optimization (SEO) & marketing (SEM), display advertising, programmatic media, and advertorials.

Guest Speaker: Zev Kanter, Digital Media Strategist

WEEK 11 (Tuesday, 11/17)

Measurement & Analytics Overview

Review analytics best practices; develop an actionable measurement plan by defining and rationalizing KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).

Guest speaker: Markus Hammer, Analyst

Assignment due 11/24: Mini Class Presentation Topics

WEEK 12 (Tuesday, 11/24)

The Art of the Pitch (+ Mini Class Presentations)

Be introduced to the key elements required to deliver a compelling, entertaining, and ultimately persuasive pitch.

WEEK 13 (Tuesday, 12/1)

Final Project: Presentation by Teams 1 & 2



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WEEK 14 (Tuesday, 12/8)

Final Project: Presentation by Teams 3 & 4

WEEK 15 (Tuesday, 12/15)

Final Wrap-up; Review Feedback on Presentations