



**Georgetown University, MPS PR/CC | Fall 2016**

**MPPR-710-01: Media Relations**

**Class Meets:** Monday, 5:20-7:50 PM

**Professor:** Erin A. Hennessy

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will provide you with the skills you need to successfully execute media relations activities in a variety of settings. You will leave this course knowing how to research reporters and outlets, build a media relations plan and messaging platform, identify and prepare spokespeople, manage crisis communications and employ social media to drive your messages. Lectures, readings and assignments will be complemented by guest speakers who are actively working in the field and will share insights gained through their professional experiences.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Practice media relations in a range of organizational settings
- Plan, implement and manage media and new media programs
- Develop messages and select and prepare spokespeople
- Conduct media interviews with print, broadcast and online outlets
- Utilize social media as part of a media relations campaign
- Sharpen your critical thinking and communication skills

### **ATTENDANCE**

In-class discussion and practice are essential to mastering the content of this course. Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time.

If you are detained from attending a class or arriving before it begins, you are responsible for notifying me via email prior to the start of class.

If you are aware at the beginning of the semester of necessary absences, please notify me immediately. This includes absences for religious holidays or medical reasons.

*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 from 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.*

You are responsible for all material discussed and instructions given in class beyond the formal presentation.

### **WORK SUBMITTED**

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Format. All work should be submitted as a Word document. Font size should be 12 pt; margins should be 1 inch, and spacing should be 1.15. Please utilize AP Style—the AP Stylebook is available at the library, at most large bookstores, and online and is a worthwhile investment should you

choose to purchase it. Include your name, the date, and the assignment title on all pages of each assignment.

- Late policy. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. If you need to miss a class, your assignment must be submitted via email by the beginning of the class in which it was due. Late work will be dropped a half grade for each week it is late and will not be accepted after two weeks. If there are extenuating circumstances of which I should be aware, please make arrangements to speak with me in advance of the due date.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

- Cell phones. Out of respect for the instructor, your classmates, and our guest speakers, please silence and refrain from using your cell phone during class.

- Laptops. Use of laptops for note-

taking is permitted. Often, class discussion about media relations is enhanced by the ability to perform on-

spot research or find examples that support or refute points under discussion. However, using class time to attend to personal or work email, engage in social media, or otherwise remove yourself from the conversation is both disrespectful and unwise and your class participation grade will suffer.

- Classroom etiquette. I welcome and encourage discussion and expect that all members of the class will engage respectfully and civilly. I encourage you to ask questions during class. Chances are if you're wondering about something, at least one of your colleagues will be also. Always feel empowered to raise your hand and voice your question.

- Incompletes. I will not offer incomplete grades, except in the most exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances. Job requirements do not qualify.

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

The resources for this course include articles, book excerpts, case studies, multimedia, and RFPs. The readings are chosen to give you a solid foundation for understanding and internalizing the coursework

All articles, book excerpts, cases, and multimedia required for class will be distributed in advance, via Blackboard or email. Readings not included in the initial syllabus will be provided later in the semester, so we can review real-time cases and current events.

In order to work effectively with the media, you must be engaged with the media. In addition to readings outlined below, you should cultivate a daily habit of engaging with major print, broadcast and online news outlets, as well as those outlets specific to your industry/the industry in which you work or wish to work.

## **Recommended Resource**

As mentioned above, the AP Stylebook is a critical resource for those writing for the media. While the Stylebook is updated each year, copies of the prior year's book may be available online for less than the current edition. The AP Stylebook is also available in the Georgetown University library.

## **LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR MPPR-**

505 <http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/researchcourseguides>  
<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/prcc>

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

You are expected to submit work on time and of high quality. Please refer to the course schedule and plan your timetable for completing assignments in advance. I encourage you to actively ask questions prior to submitting any assignment. As long as you submit your assignments for review (with a specific question

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n in mind) at least three business days before the assignment is due, I would be happy to review your specific question and discuss it with you. Feedback on all final assignments will be provided in a

timely manner; no more than two weeks after the assignment was turned in. All grading criteria, including page length and essential content, will be distributed in advance and discussed in class.

### **1. Outlet and Reporter Research – 50 points**

Select a media outlet and reporter from a list provided during class. Conduct research to gather the following information:

- Media outlet overview (audience figures, frequency, history, publisher/media owner, target audience); key editorial sections or news programming information; and extent of online presence
- Reporter profile including beats and columns if applicable. Review of recent articles/stories (what has the reporter been covering?). Review of blog posts or Tweets. Analysis of their writing/reporting style. Do they use quotes, facts, outside experts, unnamed sources?

Based on what you learned, how would you pitch this reporter if you were doing PR for a company or organization he/she covers? How would you interact with the reporter on his/her blog or Twitter account?

You will submit a brief overview of your findings. The overview will be no more than two pages, and bullet points are acceptable. Be prepared to discuss your outlet and reporter in class.

### **2. Key Message Development –100 points**

Identify a client/brand and current campaign to develop key message points for an interview with a reporter that you've identified (using your knowledge honed in assignment #1). Prepare a key message document with no more than 10 messages/soundbites that would be used in the interview with the reporter. Based on the reporter identified, craft five potential questions that the reporter might ask the identified client/brand with brief answers utilizing your key messages. In the questions/answers provided, provide an example where the client/brand bridges back to a key message that they are trying to convey. (2-3 pages)

### **3. Crafting a Pitch – 200 points**

You will be given a story to pitch to a member of the news media. Draft a memo for your leadership team that outlines your strategy, including which reporters/outlets you will pitch and why, the essential elements of your pitch, your suggested spokesperson and assets that would be essential to your pitch (2-3 pages). Each student will present their strategy and pitch to the class (3-5 minutes).

### **4. Crisis Analysis – 200 points**

Identify a public figure, company or organization that has faced a high profile crisis. Describe the situation and their response. Did the person, company or organization handle the crisis effectively? Why or why not? If you had led their response team, what actions would you have recommended? Be sure to give particular consideration to what role, if any, social media played in both the crisis and the response (3 page max + class presentation).

### **Final Project – 500 points**

You will work in teams of four or five students (depending on class size) to develop a media relations plan for a client that will be provided to your group. Your plan should include the following:

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- Executive Summary
- Objectives
- Target Audiences
- Relevant Research

- Key Messages
- Communication Recommendations
  - Strategies
  - Tactics
- Timeline
- Required Resources
- Success Metrics

Your plan should not exceed 10 pages. Our last class will be dedicated to presentation of plans, not to exceed 10 minutes. We will discuss the project in depth during Class 11.

***Class Participation – 200 points***

Participation in class discussions, including weekly news digests, is integral to your success in this class. **If you do not regularly attend and participate in class discussions, your final grade will suffer.** Thoughtful questions and comments are welcomed, and your willingness to participate is greatly appreciated. Weekly news digests are an opportunity for us all to discuss recent events, trends, and case studies culled from the news. You are encouraged to bring events or issues to the attention of class for discussion. Your participation in these conversations will be reflected in your class participation grade.

**GRADING**

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

Your course grade will be based on the following:

<b>Assignment #1</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Assignment #2</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Assignment #3</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Assignment #4</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Final Project</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>Class Participation</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1250</b>

**Grading Metrics:**

Students will have the opportunity to earn a **total of 800 points** this semester. Please reference the below grading scale:

**Grading Scale:**

<b>A</b>	93 - 100
<b>A-</b>	90 - 92
<b>B+</b>	87 - 89
<b>B</b>	83 - 86
<b>B-</b>	80 - 82
<b>C</b>	77 - 79
<b>C-</b>	73 - 76
<b>D</b>	70 - 72
<b>F</b>	69 and below

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

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**UNIVERSITY RESOURCES**

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

- MPS Writing Resource Program  
202-687-4246  
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center  
202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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>.

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## 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.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE/TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
Class 1 Aug. 31, 2016  <b>Course Overview and Introductions</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Course overview</li> <li>• Syllabus review</li> </ul>
Class 2 Sept. 12, 2016  <b>Media Landscape</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Discussion of Assignment #1</li> <li>• Topics: Modern media landscape and trends; goals/job of a reporter</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading due:</b>            “RIP press releases, hello integration... and goodbye ‘PR’? Welcome to the future of our industry,” by John Harrington, PR Week            “The Modern News Consumer,” by Pew Research Center            “State of the News Media 2016,” by Pew Research Center</p>
Class 3 Sept. 19, 2016  <b>Planning and Messaging</b>	Assignment #1 due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Review of Assignment #1</li> <li>•  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics: Identifying audiences; research; selecting channels; developing messages</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Guest speaker: Teresa Valerio Parrot, principal, TVP Communications</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Reading due:</b> “The Story Behind Caitlyn Jenner’s Masterful Press Strategy,” by Josef Adalian. <i>Vulture</i>.</p>
Class 4 Sept. 26, 2016  <b>Outreach, Relationship Building and Pitching</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Discussion of Assignments #2 and #3</li> <li>•  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topics: Building relationships with reporters; effective pitching; identifying assets</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Guest speaker: Paul Fain, news editor, Inside Higher Ed</b></li> </ul>

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DATE/TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
		<p><b>Reading due:</b> "Calculated Candor Inside Obama's Off-the-record Briefings" by Michael D. Shear</p>
<p>Class 5 Oct. 3, 2016</p> <p><b>Writing for Media</b></p>	<p>Assignment 2 due</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Topics: Press releases; op-eds; letters to the editor; social content</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Guest speaker: Kaelan Richards, regional communications director</b></p>
<p>Class 6 Oct. 17, 2016</p> <p><b>Role of Social Media</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Topics: Channel selection; content planning; measurement; leveraging success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Guest speaker: Tim McDonough, vice president of communications and marketing, American Council on Education</b></p> <p><b>Reading due:</b> "How One Stupid Tweet Blew Up</p>
<p>Class 7 Oct. 24, 2016</p> <p><b>Media Training</b></p>	<p>Assignment #3 due</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Assignment #3 presentations</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Topics: Selecting spokespeople; preparing for interview; handling hostile reporters/audiences; bridging; staffing the spokesperson</p> <p><b>Reading due:</b> "Credible," <i>Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die</i>, by Chip Heath</p>
<p>Class 8 Oct. 31, 2016</p> <p><b>Crisis Planning and Management</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Assignment #4 discussion</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Topics: Overview; value of planning; communications; handling media interest; do's and don'ts</p> <p><b>Reading due:</b> "The Art of Handling a PR Implosion," by Zachary Crockett. Priceonomics. "Communications to Prevent Crises," and "Communications When The Crisis Strikes," <i>Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach</i>, by Kat</p>
<p>Class 9 Nov. 4, 2016</p> <p><b>NOTE: FRIDAY</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media Training</li> </ul>

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DATE/TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
Class 10 Nov. 7, 2016  <b>Media Relations for Nonprofits, Government and Advocacy Organizations</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Topics: Strategy and tactics</li> <li>• <b>Guest speaker: Carol Blymire, founder, Blymire Communications</b></li> </ul>
Class 11 Nov. 14, 2016  <b>Events</b>	Assignment #4 due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Discussion of Final Project</li> <li>• Topics: Strategy; logistics; substance</li> <li>• <b>Guest speaker: Amy Arget singer, features assignment editor, <i>The Washington Post</i></b></li> </ul> <p><b>Reading due:</b> "Public Relations Tips for Event Professionals," by Gini Dietrich</p>
Class 12 Nov. 21, 2016  <b>Ethics of Media Relations</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Topics: Embargoes and exclusives; reviewing copy; corrections; relationships</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading due:</b> "Generals Sought More Positive Coverage on Head Injuries, Document Show,"</p>
Class 13 Nov. 28, 2016  <b>Career Landscape /Open Session</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Topics: Industry and career outlook; outstanding questions or interests</li> </ul>
Class 14 Dec. 5, 2016  <b>TBD</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News Digest</li> <li>• Open Discussion/Work Session</li> </ul>
Class 15 Dec. 12, 2016  <b>Final Project</b>	Final project due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final project presentations</li> </ul>