



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
School of Continuing Studies  
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Georgetown University, MPS PR/CC | Fall 2016

## **MPPR-755-02: DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

**Class Meets:** Wednesdays, 5:20-7:50pm

**Class Location:** 640 Mass Ave Washington, DC 20001 | Room: C228

**Professor:** Jon Judah

**Office Hours:** Arranged by appointment.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The world in which we communicate will change more in the next decade than in the past twenty years. Demographic shifts, the rise of cheaper, near-ubiquitous internet bandwidth, and the growth of artificial intelligence and social networking present communications professionals with a highly dynamic environment in which to plan and engage their audiences. This course will examine the fundamentals of developing and executing a digital strategy in this new connected, experience-driven reality. Students will learn the fundamentals of digital communications including technology platforms, user research and digital discovery, social media, analytics and measurement, content strategy, digital media and channel planning, and brand experience. Students will learn how to develop, apply, and present relevant strategies and tactics in both commercial and mission-driven organizations using a holistic, user-centric approach and leveraging case studies to identify best practices. This class will encourage hands-on participation, and students will leave the course with an increased knowledge of practical applications for a successful digital strategy.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Each student can expect to cultivate his or her ability to design and implement digital strategies and communications plans for his or her organization. To reach this goal you will:

1. Learn how to apply a user-centric approach to digital communications
2. Gain an in-depth understanding of the tech and business trends shaping brand experiences
3. Recognize the strengths and weaknesses of leading social media platforms including Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook and how organizations are effectively using these mediums to achieve their communications objectives.
4. Understand how to develop and implement a content strategy
5. Learn how to effectively collaborate with creative and design teams
6. Develop an understanding of how to monitor and measure user engagement and performance using leading analytics and measurement tactics and tools
7. Discuss tactics for building and engaging online communities
8. Evaluate approaches for paid versus organic media planning
9. Develop a comprehensive digital communications strategy that addresses specific business or mission challenges.

## 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. 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.

## WORK SUBMITTED

Most assignments should be completed online using our course portal. Case analyses are to be written in MS Word or Google Docs, and our final presentation will be done in Powerpoint or Keynote.

## COURSE POLICIES

- Cell phones and laptops are allowed in class however I expect your phones on silent and laptops closed during our lectures and discussions unless required by a class activity or breakout session.
- I will not offer incomplete grades, except in the most exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances. Job requirements do not qualify.
- Late work will not be accepted. Assignments are due on the date specified. Major assignments (e.g. case analyses, audit, final presentations) all have at least 2 weeks or more in duration for completion.
- You are responsible for classroom information and instructions, whether you are present in class or not. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain class notes.
- 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. Use each question as an opportunity to apply what we are learning about critical thinking and presentation skills.

## REQUIRED READINGS

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

### BOOK:

Berger, Jonah, (2010). *Contagious: why things catch on* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.).  
New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks  
ISBN: 978-1-4516-8657-9 □ \$9.52

### CASE STUDY:

Elberse, Anita and Smith, Stacey (2014). *Beyoncé*  
*Harvard Business Publishing*  
<https://hbr.org/product/beyonc%C3%A9/515036-PDF-ENG>  
\$8.95

Students are expected to purchase the above materials. All other articles, book excerpts, cases, and multimedia listed on the course schedule will be distributed in advance, via the class Canvas group. Readings not included in the initial syllabus will be provided later in the semester, so we can review real-time cases and current events.

## Recommended Readings

The following blogs and links will be referenced throughout the course. You should consider bookmarking these sites for future use:

- Seth Godin - <http://sethgodin.typepad.com/>
- Contently - The Strategist
- Digiday - <http://digiday.com/>
- Mashable (<http://mashable.com>)
- TechCrunch (<http://techcrunch.com>)
- eMarketer (<http://www.emarketer.com/Articles>)
- AdAge (<http://adage.com>)
- BuzzFeed (<http://buzzfeed.com>)

## 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 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 2 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.

Your assignments should meet Georgetown University's standard of excellence. There are three graded assignments for this class, 2 papers, and 1 final oral presentation.

**Weekly Quizzes (due weekly):** Each week you'll read select chapters in our book *Contagious* and/or select links on the featured topic for the following week. You'll then answer a few brief questions online before class, which I will then post for everyone to review and discuss during the first 20 minutes of class.

Note: The grading rubric for these quizzes will be shared at our first class.

**Case Study Analyses (Case 1 due 9/28, Case 2 due 11/9) :** We will review 2 cases this semester focusing on select topics related to digital strategy. I will hand out/post the case for your review, and you will have two weeks to read and analyze the questions associated with the case. The first case analysis will be a simple summary analysis completed individually. The second will be a group exercise for the case.

Note: specific assignment requirements and grading rubric will be shared during Weeks 2 and 8.

**Digital Audit (Due 10/19):** Select a brand or organization with which you have some familiarity. You will be given an overview of how to conduct an audit and a basic template to organize your findings. Explore the organization through all various available digital channels (.com, social, offline, video, 3<sup>rd</sup> party content providers, etc.). Conduct a top-line evaluation capturing a few

bullet points for what is working well and what could be improved upon.

Note: specific assignment requirements and grading rubric will be shared during Week 4.

**Final Project Presentation (Due 11/30 – 12/7):** Our class will culminate in the creation of an actual digital strategy and communications plan for a select organization. I will review the approach to the presentation at our introductory class, where you will be divided into teams. Each team will be responsible for producing a presentation (mix of slides and written analysis) 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 an articulate, compelling, and professional client-ready presentation.

Note: specific assignment requirements and grading rubric will be shared during Week 10.

### **GRADING**

Your course grade will be based on the following components:

Weekly Quizzes	40 points
Digital Audit	30
Case Study 1 (individual)	30
Case Study 2 (Group)	30
Final Project	70
<u>Class Participation</u>	<u>30</u>

**Total** **230 points**

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

A	100 - 94	B-	82 - 80
A-	90 - 93	C	79 - 70
B+	89 - 87	F	69 - 0
B	86 - 83		

I 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:

- 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>.

### **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	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
Class 1 September 7, 2016  <b>Course overview and introduction to Digital Communications Strategy</b>	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review syllabus</li> <li>• Expectations</li> <li>• Team assignments</li> </ul>
Class 2 Sept 14, 2016  <b>Signal &gt; Noise – how digital drives our economy</b>	Book Chapter 1 (Social Currency)  <a href="#">The Best Digital Strategists Don't Think in Terms of Either/Or</a>  ---- Assignment: Case Study, Beyonce (due 9/28)	Weekly quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book and Link Discussion</li> <li>• Lecture</li> </ul>
Class 3 Sept 21, 2016  <b>Touch, talk, feel - Communicating in a world of experiences</b>	Book Chapter 2 (Triggers)	Weekly quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book discussion</li> <li>• Mobile, Social, IoT and Experience</li> <li>• Lecture</li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
Class 4 Sept 28, 2016  <b>Users, not customers – understanding user behavior and the brand experience</b>	Book Chapter 3 (Emotion)  ----- Handout: How To: Organize and Execute a Digital Audit  Assignment: Digital Audit (due 10/19)	Weekly quiz  Individual Case Study – 1 page write up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book and Link Discussion</li> <li>• Case review</li> <li>• Lecture</li> <li>• Review template: Digital Audit Template</li> </ul>
Class 5 Oct 5, 2016  <b>Purpose to Platform – Understanding digital mediums</b>	Book Chapter 4 (Public)	Weekly quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book and link Discussion</li> <li>• Lecture</li> </ul>

DATE/TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
Class 6 Oct 12, 2016  <b>Do they really care? Developing a content strategy</b>	Book Chapter 6 (Stories)	Weekly quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book and link discussion</li> <li>• Lecture</li> </ul>
Class 7 Oct 19, 2016  <b>Keep it brief – storytelling and concepting with creative teams</b>	Watch Briefly (Video on Vimeo)	Weekly quiz  Digital Audit Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book and link discussion</li> <li>• Lecture</li> </ul>
Class 8 Oct 26, 2016  <b>Finders keepers - SEO and Analytics</b>	Article links TBD  Assignment: Group Case Studies Due 11/9	Weekly quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book and link discussion</li> <li>• Lecture</li> </ul>
Class 9 Nov 2, 2016  <b>Paid, Earned, Owned - Media and Comms Planning</b>	Article Links TBD	Weekly quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book and link Discussion</li> <li>• Lecture</li> </ul>
Class 10 Nov 9, 2016  <b>Tribal drive – tactics for growing and engaging your community</b>	Article Links TBD  Assignment: Final team presentations (Due 11/30, 12/7)	Weekly quiz  Case Study 2 – Group Analysis Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book and link discussion</li> </ul>
Class 11 Nov 16, 2016  <b>Pitch perfect – the art of presenting and selling your ideas</b>	Article Links TBD	Weekly quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture on pitching ideas</li> <li>• Interactive group activity</li> </ul>
Class 12 Nov 23, 2016  <b>Expert Panel</b>	None	Questions for panelists	Panel Q&A with communications leaders (Non profit and commercial)

DATE/TOPIC	READING DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE	IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
Class 13 Nov 30, 2016  <b>Final Presentations –            Teams 1 and 2</b>		All teams deliver final presentation files	Team presentations
Class 14 December 7, 2016  <b>Final Presentations –            Teams 3 and 4</b>			Team presentations
Class 15 December 14, 2016  Wrap Up	None	None	Review of course objectives