



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, MPS PR/CC | FALL 2016

MPPR-950-01, MPPR-950-02: PR/CC Capstone

Class Meets: Mondays, 5:20-7:50 p.m.

Class Location: 640 Mass Ave Washington, DC 20001 | Room: C103A/B

Co-Professors: Cylor Spaulding, Ph.D. & Brigitte Johnson

Office Hours: By Appointment

**Dr. Spaulding will lead the class sessions, conduct trainings for the Capstone Advisors, and provide student and advisor support. Dr. Spaulding and Professor Johnson will provide oversight and ensure cohesion of the course experience.*

Capstone Advisors:

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| Sarah Brown |
| Allyson Funk |
| Amanda Kiely |
| Steve Lewis |
| Rachel Metscher |
| Mika Rivera |
| John Whipple |
| Laura Wilson |

Advisors are the main points of contact for students throughout the semester. On the first day of class, groups of four to six students will be partnered with each advisor and collaborate with their advisor throughout the semester. **The advisors will meet with individual students in their pod, give feedback, grade assignments, correspond via email, and advise students on the successful completion of all course assignments.*

Please contact via [e-mail](#) to discuss any questions about the course website and notification of any issues related to your class attendance. The course coordinator is **Bernice Morquette.*

The grading panel for your final plan and presentation will include Professors Spaulding and Johnson and the Capstone Advisors.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Capstone is the final academic opportunity to assess and apply your strategic communications skills and knowledge. The course focuses on the comprehensive skills you have built throughout your time in MPS PR/CC by evaluating your writing, strategic thinking, creativity, and ethical framework in a real-time context.

During your final challenge, you will apply your strategic communications skills to an existing communications challenge identified by a company/organization of your choosing. Working individually, you will respond to a communication problem or opportunity for your client. At the close of the semester, you will be expected to write and present a well-researched, insightful, creative plan that illuminates how your strategic considerations will lead to positive outcomes for your client. Your plan will tell the story of the original research, implementation plan, timelines and budget necessary to meet the client's communication goal.

Although the primary focus for the semester is on creating a comprehensive plan, there will be in-class assignments to review and diagnose your mastery of specific concepts in strategic communications planning and responsible communication.

The capstone experience is intended to ensure you have the strategic skills and confidence necessary to be a leader in responsible communication, and provide a unique networking and career-enhancing opportunity. In addition to the minimum, cumulative grade point average of 3.0 required for graduation from the MPS PR/CC program, you must receive a minimum grade of a B in the capstone course to graduate. Students with a 3.0 cumulative GPA, who receive a final grade of a B- or below may receive one opportunity to retake the course, if approved by the associate dean.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will be expected to:

1. Effectively apply strategic and creative communications skills to complex challenges
2. Write and present a fully integrated communications plan, representative of industry best practices, trends and tools
3. Reveal a commitment to their personal code of ethics
4. Demonstrate the professional characteristics exhibited by innovators in the field, including commitment to ongoing professional development, situation-appropriate communication skills, intellectual curiosity, leadership, and engagement in the industry

ATTENDANCE/CLASS PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to attend every class and individual advising session and arrive on time. If you are detained from attending a class or arriving on time, you are responsible for notifying your advisor and the Capstone Coordinator via email prior to the start of class. Absence at an individual advisor meeting will be tracked for attendance as all other class meetings. Due to the high number of working practitioners in the program, professional obligations do not qualify as emergencies. If you miss a class for an unexcused reason, attendance credit will **not** be given even if the lecture is captured by video recording.

Attendance is part of your Class Participation grade and is calculated by two requirements: 1) coming to class and meeting with your Capstone Advisor at the agreed upon times and 2) emailing your updated plan 48 hours in advance of your meeting with your Capstone Advisor. You are required to attend (in person or remotely if arranged in advance) your individual meetings and you must send tangible (written or electronic) progress to discuss related to your plan 48 hours in advance of your meeting.

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.

COURSE POLICIES

- A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. **Students should turn off all cell phones 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 professor or advisor to share something.
- You are responsible for classroom information and instructions, **whether you are present in class or not.** If you must miss a class (see "Attendance/Class Participation," above), it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain class notes from a colleague in class. All class slides will be posted on Blackboard.
- If you are not present for an in-class activity, no makeup will be given, except in cases of documented emergencies.
- I will not offer incomplete grades, except in the most exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances. Job requirements do not qualify.
- 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.

WORK SUBMITTED

Your assignments should meet Georgetown University's standard of excellence. Please follow these guidelines for all written assignments:

- Title your electronic files with *[Your Last Name][Assignment Name]*, as listed below.
- Put student name, assignment title and date in the top left of the first page.
- Use no smaller than 11-point and no larger than 12-point, plain font, no larger than 1" margins, and page numbering (for pages 2+).
- If necessary, reference your sources using documentary-note style with footnotes or endnotes. American Psychological Association (APA) style citations and references are required (see <http://www.library.georgetown.edu/citations> for reference). If you do not reference your work, you run the risk of plagiarizing.
- Consider the tone and formality of the assignments. Avoid contractions, slang, fragments or jargon.
- Proofread your work carefully. Do not undermine your good work by having it marred by errors in spelling, usage, grammar and formatting. Your work is graded on both the content and your ability to express yourself in a polished and professional manner. Use other classmates and/or the MPS Writing Resource Program (see "University Resources," below) to ensure you are submitting your best work.
- **Late submissions will result in deductions of 5% per day.** That means if the assignment was due via email at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, anything submitted after 5 p.m. gets a 5% deduction from the grade it would have otherwise earned; anything received after 5 p.m. on Thursday gets a 10% deduction, etc.

REQUIRED READING

Please arrive to class on the first day, having read the following book (we will not review individual chapters in class and older editions are acceptable):

- Wilson, L., & Ogden, J. (2014). *Strategic communications planning for effective public relations and marketing* (6th ed.). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.
ISBN-13: 978-1465249159 or ISBN-10: 146524915X | \$100.00

CLIENT SELECTION

Networking is an integral factor for a successful career. Thinking strategically about a future employer or areas of expertise you would like to gain will help you select your client for capstone. **If you prefer to use your capstone experience to impact the nonprofit community, we have a database for your use. Contact Bridget Pooley, Program Manager in the Center for Social Impact Communication, via e-mail for questions or to express your interest in collaborating with a nonprofit or responsible business in our database.**

On the first day of class, each student is expected to arrive with a capstone client selected. Since you will be actively collaborating with your client throughout the semester, you should select a client that fits into one of the following categories: you would consider the organization for future employment, you want to network with the organization, or you are passionate about the organization's mission. After an initial discussion with your client, **you will give a 30-second summary of the client's name, your contact, and the organization's communications challenge with you on the first day of class.** Below are a few general guidelines on the requirements for your client and their communications challenge.

Your capstone client must be:

1. Accessible and willing to commit the required amount of time to your project
2. A key person within the organization who has longevity in the company/organization and a basic understanding of communications
3. Willing to provide access to key information, research and corporate materials
4. Available to interact with your individual advisor on an as needed basis
5. Involved in providing feedback during the planning process
6. Able to participate in the identification of the communication challenges/opportunities
7. Committed to the value of communication and open to implementing the proposed plan

Their communications challenge should be:

1. Relevant to the business goal of the company/organization
2. Attainable and measurable
3. Complex and contemporary enough to inspire multiple, creative communication strategies and tactics

If your client has any of these characteristics, they will not be a good fit for capstone:

1. Client does not understand the communications function
2. Client does not have any business infrastructure
3. All of client's funding will run out in the next three months or less
4. Client currently employs student, including these work arrangements: consultant, intern or fellow
5. Client's potential communications budget is less than \$2,000
6. Client's product/service has not launched yet or does not have a website or the company has less than three employees (*in some cases this is allowable with special approval from the Professor*)

Preparing for your first prospective client meeting: In order to provide strategic counsel to your client and maximize your interaction as a networking or future employment opportunity, you must first understand your client's business and their needs. If you schedule an in-person meeting with your client, arrive at your meeting dressed in business attire. For all client meetings, whether in-person or via telephone, you should be prepared with: (1) an understanding of your contact's background; (2) an outline of prepared questions; and (3) a review of the client's website and recent media coverage before your first interaction; so you can get the most out of your time with your client.

Remember to close your first meeting with next steps, ask if you can follow-up with questions in the near future, and send a thank you note or email to your client. Below you will find suggested questions to guide your discussion. Remember to refer to the client selection and communications challenge requirements in the syllabus prior to meeting with your client.

Suggested Interview Prompts:

1. Please provide a brief history of your organization, your mission, and the constituents/consumers/community/stakeholders you serve.
2. What communication challenges is your organization currently facing?
3. Do you currently have a strategic plan? Do you have a communications plan in place? If so, please briefly describe your plan.

4. If you do not have one in place, how will a strategic communications plan help your organization accomplish its mission?
5. Do you currently have a dedicated communications person (or team) on staff?
6. If approved by the Capstone Advisor, how do you hope your organization will benefit from collaborating with a Georgetown MPS PR/CC student?
7. In what ways do you anticipate I, as a Georgetown MPS PR/CC student, will benefit from collaborating with your organization?
8. Please provide me with samples of your communications materials; they will help me better understand your work and how you currently communicate. (Samples can include website links, media kits, press releases, communications plans, brochures, etc.)

CLIENT APPROVAL

Our goal is for your clients to be approved before the start of class, so you can focus your energy on producing your final plan throughout the semester. **To request client approval, please email your responses to the prompts below via e-mail.**

1. Your client's name, location, and website address
2. Your client contact, their title, the number of times you've corresponded with the client, and whether the contact has committed to participating as a client
3. The communications challenge
4. A brief statement explaining why your chosen organization is a suitable capstone client (and any remaining concerns)
5. A brief overview of what your client hopes to gain from this collaborative experience
6. Please confirm that your client does not meet any of these criteria:
 1. Client does not understand the communications function
 2. Client does not have any business infrastructure
 3. All of client's funding will run out in the next three months or less
 4. Client currently employs student, including these work arrangements: consultant, intern or fellow
 5. Client's potential communications budget is less than \$2,000
 6. Client's product/service has not launched yet or does not have a website or the company has less than three employees (*in some cases this is allowable with special approval from the Professor, provide explanation for why your client should be approved, despite fitting these characteristics*)

You should request client approval no later than two weeks before the first class meeting. Once approved, you will have your client sign a client agreement. Then, you will share your signed client agreement with your Capstone Advisor. Your Capstone Advisor will correspond with your client to thank them for their participation and provide an extra point of contact if needed.

**If you do not obtain client approval by week three of the course, you will be advised to withdraw from the class, given the schedule of client-related assignments.*

After the close of the semester, you will receive feedback on your written plan and pitch, which you will use to revise your materials for delivery and presentation to your client. **Although you will not implement your client plan, you will be responsible for revising and giving all the final plan documents to your client within the month following your final capstone class.** If requested by your client, your advisor will also send their feedback on your final plan to your client, so they receive an objective perspective on the rigor of your plan. Be sure to set clear expectations for how you will collaborate with your client in the planning process and the contents of the final plan they will receive.

ASSIGNMENTS

You are expected to submit high quality, client-ready work, on time. All assignments are due by the beginning of class on the due date specified in the schedule, unless otherwise noted. **You will submit all written assignments via Canvas.**

All students will be provided with grading rubrics for the following major assignments: plan outline, final plan, and final pitch. Students who earn a failing grade on assignments other than the final plan, will be granted the opportunity to redo the assignment to earn an average of their initial and final score. However, the final grade on the assignment cannot exceed a "C" letter grade, even if the new average is above a "C." Below you will find descriptions of all the course assignments:

In preparation for this class, you **must** complete a [Capstone Readiness Survey](#) located on Blackboard before the **first class meeting**. This will help you self-assess any gaps in your strategic communications planning knowledge, so you can focus your pre-capstone preparation.

Quick-fire Challenge (25 points): Students will respond to a written scenario to demonstrate their mastery of the elements of strategic communications planning. You will be graded on your insights, the plausibility of your recommendations, concise writing, strategic thinking, and creativity.

Ethical Response Paper (30 points): You will be presented with a situation depicting an ethical dilemma, typical in communications. You will apply the personal code of ethics you developed earlier in the program in the Ethics course, by writing your response to, reflection on, and examination of the situation.

Research Plan (25 points): You will submit a plan outlining and discussing the primary research you will be conducting for your Final Plan. Your research plan should clearly outline what type of research you are planning on conducting and why and provide a timeline for conducting it.

Communications Plan Midterm Outline (70 points): You will submit an outline of your approach to your client's communications challenge. Your plan will convey information ranging from the research and background of your plan through to the messaging only. The document should outline your insightful considerations and convey the strength and cohesion of the recommendations you plan to make in your final plan.

Final Plan (150 points): You will use the feedback from your outline to complete a 30-page written plan that is comprehensive, client-ready, and representative of current trends and tools of the industry. The plan should demonstrate your professional and academic knowledge and experience in a proposal that balances strategy and creativity.

Final Pitch (40 points): You will give a 5 minute pitch of your final plan to your colleagues and a panel of the professor and advisors.

Class Participation (15 points): As previously stated under "Attendance/Class Participation", you are required to attend (in person or remotely if arranged in advance) your individual meetings and you must send tangible (written or electronic) progress to discuss related to your plan 48 hours in advance of your meeting. You will begin the semester with full credit for participation. Your Capstone Advisor will only make deductions if you do not attend your individual meetings and do not send progress. You are required to attend the all-class sessions in-person per the course schedule.

The student(s) with the highest combined score on both the final plan and final pitch and a cumulative GPA of 3.75 or above will be eligible for an opportunity to join the elite Capstone Advisor cohort.

GRADING

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| Quick-fire challenge | (25 points) | } | Total: 355 points |
| Ethical response paper | (30 points) | | A: 93 – 100% |
| Research plan | (25 points) | | A-: 90 – 92.99% |
| Communications Plan Outline | (70 points) | | B+: 87 – 89.99% |
| Final Plan | (150 points) | | B: 83 – 86.99% |
| Final Pitch | (40 points) | | B-: 80 – 82.99% |
| Class Participation | (15 points) | | C: 70 – 79.99% |
| | | | F: Below 70% |

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/disability>) 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 professor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

SCHEDULE

| Class | Date | Topics to Discuss | Assignments Due |
|-------|--|--|---|
| Wk 1 | WEDNESDAY, Aug. 31 NO CLASS SEPT. 5 | <p>REQUIRED IN-CLASS ATTENDANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Capstone and Capstone Advisors • Client Review • Library Research Discussion • Quick-fire Assignment Distributed for In-class Completion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Read Wilson and Ogden *Capstone readiness survey completed online *Client approved *Quick-fire assignment due in-class before 7:50 p.m. via Blackboard |
| Wk 2 | Mon, Sept. 12 | <p>REQUIRED IN-CLASS ATTENDANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss Ethics Assignment and Grading Rubric • Discuss Research Plan Assignment and Grading Rubric • Discuss Outline Assignment and Grading Rubric • Elements Q&A Session • Consulting Workshop Guest Lecture <p>This is the final deadline for <u>late</u> client approval; if your client is not yet approved you are strongly encouraged to drop the course. Please be advised of that the 100% refund period ends within the first two weeks of class. Go to http://registrar.georgetown.edu/registration/refunds-</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Review Week 2: Elements Review slides on Blackboard |

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| | | and-tuition/ for details on the exact date. | |
| Wk 3 | Mon, Sept. 19 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS This meeting may be a brainstorm session with your entire pod, rather than a one-on-one session, depending on the interest of each pod member. | *Recommended Topics: Research through Objectives *Ethics assignment due by 5:20 p.m. via Canvas |
| Wk 4 | Mon, Sept. 26 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS | *Recommended Topics: Developing a research strategy |
| Wk 5 | Mon, Oct. 3 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS | *Recommended Topics: Objectives through Messages *Research Plan assignment due by 5:20 p.m. via Canvas |
| Wk 6 | NO CLASS OCT. 10 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS Oct. 10 is a university holiday, but please still find time to have a meeting with your advisor this week. | *Recommended Topic: Developing messages and strategies for key publics |
| Wk 7 | Mon, Oct. 17 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS | *Recommended Topic: Final Draft of Outline |
| Wk 8 | Mon., Oct. 24 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS | *Outline assignment due by 5:20 p.m. via Canvas |
| Wk 9 | Mon., Oct. 31 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS | *Recommended Topic: From Outline to Final Plan |
| Wk 10 | Mon., Nov. 7 | REQUIRED IN-CLASS ATTENDANCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisor Panel • Pitch Skills Presentation • Discuss Final Pitch and Final Plan Grading Rubrics • Optional Group Meetings | *Recommended Topic: Review Outline Feedback |
| Wk 11 | Mon., Nov. 14 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS | *Recommended Topic: Final Plan |
| Wk 12 | Mon., Nov. 21 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS | *Recommended Topic: Final Plan |
| Wk 13 | Mon., Nov. 28 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS | *Recommended Topic: Final Plan |
| Wk 14 | Mon., Dec. 5 | INDIVIDUAL ADVISOR MEETINGS Peer Brainstorm for Pitches: meeting space available in the classroom before and after individual advisor meetings for pitch practice and peer critique | *Recommended Topic: Final Plan |

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| Wk 15 | Mon., Dec. 12 Note: students will be assigned a room for their pitch presentation | REQUIRED IN-CLASS ATTENDANCE: FINAL PITCH The final pitch class will meet from 5:20 p.m. until 7:50 p.m., given the number of students enrolled in the class. Two classrooms will run pitch presentations simultaneously. | Final Plan due by 5:00 p.m. via Canvas AND one printed copy in the bin located at the security desk at the SCS entrance |
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