



## MPMC 841-01: Activating Cause Audiences

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Mondays, 5:20pm to 7:50pm | Spring 2017

Instructor: Evan C. Parker

Office hours are by appointment.

### COURSE OVERVIEW

Every cause is driven by its supporters — from donors, to advocates, to volunteers – and in today's landscape, each and every non-profit organization is looking to convert their supporters into donors. We'll review the latest in behavioral economics, program analytics, and brain science for strategies that encourage target audiences to move from watchers, into supporters, into donors – and help do good in the world.

This course will explore how people are “wired” to support causes, best practices from campaigns and tactics that leading causes use to drive support, and how a supporter's generation (Millennials, Boomers, etc.) impacts what they want from their causes and non-profits. The course will help students understand how to be a successful part of a non-profit marketing, conversion, and/or fundraising communications campaign, with a focus on “conversion” – e.g., encouraging people to give you the means (via email opt-in, mailing address opt-in, or social media follow) to continue the conversation with them over the long haul.

In the end, students will know how to craft (and evaluate) a pragmatic acquisition, conversion, engagement and retention strategy that goes beyond just informing and educating, instead driving people to support non-profits tangibly and directly.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

- Develop and execute conversion-focused communications strategies, with industry-leading best practices to motivate and activate supporters.
- Understand the motivations potential supporters have, and how to best use these motivations to move supporters “up the pyramid” to become better and more attentive, including how an understanding of the full lifecycle of a supporter can lead to better conversion strategies.
- Select the best target audience segments for a program, and tailor strategies based on how different cohorts (based on age, lifecycle, demographics, etc.) view their relationship with a non-profit.



## REQUIRED READINGS/COURSE STRUCTURE

Given the nature of the subject matter, there is no single, comprehensive “textbook” that could be purchased for this class. Additionally, most potential primary source readings are too dense and complicated to be reasonably consumed week-to-week.

*As a result, this class will have no required readings.*

Lectures will synthesize from dozens (actually, hundreds) of books and publications, and will be thoroughly documented with notes pointing to source materials – allowing you to follow up on the materials of interest to you at a time of your choosing.

Twice during the semester, you will “adopt” a non-profit of your choosing, and the follow these non-profits through the semester. Your out-of-class time will focus on doing your own evaluations of organizations from raw communications materials.

Through the semester, you will focus on taking lessons learned from class lectures (and your own independent study) and applying them to real world situations for these adopted non-profits.

## LIBRARY RESOURCES

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

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

## ATTENDANCE

As there are no required readings, in-class discussion and participation are essential to mastering the content of this course. You 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 reduced to an A-). Each class missed beyond the first three will result in an additional final grade reduction of one level.*

## ASSIGNMENTS

The class will have three major assignments, as well as a series of smaller activities that will be evaluated as part of a class participation grade.

### *Class Participation Grade*

In lieu of reading, some weeks you'll be asked to execute a small assignment in preparation for class, from selecting a nonprofit to “adopt,” to reading their conversion materials, to analyzing their target audiences, etc. These ad-hoc assignments are listed as “Worksheets” in the Class Schedule below and



are designed exclusively to allow you to get early feedback you can incorporate into your three primary graded assignments.

You'll be asked to submit these ad-hoc assignments to the instructor, and the instructor will provide feedback on your submission, but these worksheets will not be graded in the traditional sense. Instead, class participation will focus more on your level of effort and ability to make a compelling argument rather than the "correctness" of your conclusions.

There is a maximum of 45 participation points available from the 15 classes during this semester. The points will be given as such:

- By default, you will get 3 points each class for being present, prepared and participatory, which includes completing the ad-hoc assignment (if any).
- In special circumstances, you will get a 4th point for being exceptional in either your preparation (e.g. the ad-hoc assignment described above) or in-class participation.
- You could receive *less* than 3 points (a) if you multi-task during class, such as using a smartphone, tablet or laptop outside of the context of note-taking, or (b) if you did not complete the ad-hoc assignment adequately or in a timely manner, or (c) if you were significantly late to class, or were anti-social during the class session (i.e. being dismissive of others' views).
- You will receive 0 points if you fail to attend that week's class.

If you have to miss a class – even due to events outside of your control – you must let the instructor know *in advance*, and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Please note that "making up" a missed class only impacts the class participation grade, and has no impact on any University-mandated penalties described in the "Attendance" section above.

### *Write a Case for Giving – Week 05*

You will provide a 700 to 1,000-word Case for Giving/Support for your chosen non-profit, with two parts:

- A memo describing and justifying your organization's optimal approach to a case for giving/support, with the following sections: The Need, The Beneficiaries, The Differentiators, Donor Involvement, The Urgency.
- An email, letter, speech or voiceover script that executes your recommended approach as if it would be presented to an actual prospective supporter.

Specific requirements, including details for submitting the assignment, can be viewed on Blackboard.

### *Recreate a Conversion Strategy – Week 10*

Identify a conversion strategy that your chosen non-profit is already using, and then describe and justify the strategy in a 1,500 to 2,500-word strategic plan/memo as if you were "pitching" the strategy for the first time. Your paper will include the following sections:



- Executive Summary – An elevator pitch for the campaign you've chosen including what the campaign will do, the goals and objectives behind it, and a justification for why this is the right conversion campaign for the organization to execute.
- Key Publics and Deep Needs -- Identify and justify the primary supporter audience segments needed to reach those goals, and the deep needs that will best motivate those audiences.
- Provide a narrative, and examples of supporting content, that best supports your organization's conversion strategy, and explain why they will be the most effective.
- Explain the offers you feel will best convert your audiences and why.

Specific requirements, including details for submitting the assignment, can be viewed on Blackboard.

### *Create a Conversion Campaign – Week 15*

The “capstone” project for the class will be the creation of a conversion plan for a non-profit. The instructor will split the class into small groups, and work with each group to select a non-profit organization. The teams will then create a conversion campaign plan, and “pitch” that plan to the class during the final class session.

The elements of the conversion campaign will include:

- Campaign Strategy (goals, objectives, key publics, etc.)
- Case for Giving/Support
- Proposed Campaign Tactics

The final product will be a group 18 to 24 minute in-class presentation, a question and answer period on the strategy to follow, and an accompanying PowerPoint document. There is no “written” deliverable to be turned in, only the presentation.

Specific requirements, including details for submitting the assignment, can be viewed on Blackboard.

## **WORK SUBMITTED**

Quality assignments will review and include references and citations to a wide range of donor communications, including (but not limited to) website content, direct mail, email (especially welcome series and post-donation series), annual reports and brand videos.

All papers should be typed in a 12-point font, double-spaced. All papers should use a standard academic referencing style. Georgetown's referencing style of choice is APA, but the specific style does not matter so long as the professor can intuitively understand your citations. Please include your name, the assignment title, and the date on the assignment, and please number your pages.

In addition, please note the following requirements for all works submitted:

### *Attribution*

In professional fundraising and marketing circles, the ability to read source materials is nearly as important to a conversation as the conclusions presented in a paper or presentation. Proper attribution



increases the credibility of a strategy; they do not detract from a full appreciation of your work. As a result, please endnote extensively so that others may learn from your research.

### *Plagiarism Checks*

In full disclosure, the instructor uses a plagiarism checker as a matter of course, so please make sure you are fully comfortable that the work is unassailably yours before turning it in. Plagiarized work will receive an automatic failing grade for the assignment, and will be reported to the Honor Council in accordance to University policy.

### *Assignment Submission*

To submit your assignments, upload them to the Blackboard course management system at <http://campus.georgetown.edu/>.

### *Late Submissions*

All assignments are due before the beginning of class (8:00pm) on the due date specified in the schedule, unless otherwise noted. All late assignments, regardless of circumstances (e.g. circumstances within or outside of your control) will receive a grade-level reduction for each day they are late. (A day is defined, as 0 to 24 hours past the date/time it was due.) For example, an assignment turned in 30 minutes late that would otherwise have earned an “A” would now receive an “A-“.

### *Grading Criteria/Rubrics*

When each assignment is first discussed in class, the instructor will provide specific guidance on how to ensure your assignments are complete and comprehensive, including insight into the rubric used to grade that assignment.

Questions about grading criteria for specific assignments should be brought to the instructor’s attention at least one week before submission of assignments, so that all students may benefit from the conversation. All grades and grading criteria are the sole discretion of the instructor.

## **GRADING**

The graded assignments are weighted as follows:

1. Class Participation (including ad-hoc preparation assignments) — 45 points.
2. Case for Giving/Support — 45 points.
3. Organization Conversion Strategy — 120 points.
4. Final Non-profit Conversion Plan — 90 points.

Total: 300 points.

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



A: 300 – 279	B: 260.99 – 249	F: 209.99 – 0
A-: 278.99 – 270	B-: 248.99 – 240	
B+: 269.99 – 261	C: 239.99 – 210	

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

## COURSE POLICIES

In respect to those around you:

- You are expected to act professionally, and to not be dismissive of others' views.
- The use of laptops and tablets will be limited to what is required for note taking.
- Any kind of messaging or social media regardless of device (including smartphones, laptops or tablets) will be relegated to breaks.
- Please keep smartphones in your bags and on silent (please note that “vibrate” is not silent).
- You are welcome to bring food or drink to the classroom, but please be prepared to share.

Repeated violations of these policies will impact your grade, including (but not limited to) your class participation grade as described below in the “Assignments” section above.

## UNIVERSITY RESOURCES AND POLICIES

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on the 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://ldss.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/>



### *Observance of Religious Holidays*

All classes at Georgetown follow the policy for the accommodation of observance of religious holidays outlined in the student handbook:

*Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work.*

Please inform the instructor in writing (or email) of any religious observances that conflict with class meetings at the start of the semester. Students will be accommodated for observed holidays that correspond with the list of major holidays published by the Office of the Provost. Students who are not accommodated to their satisfaction should discuss the matter with an advising dean.

### *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://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) 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**

The following is a course schedule, including class topics, assignment due dates, and planned guest speakers. The schedule (and the syllabus as a whole) may change to accommodate discussion of other topics based on opportunity, emerging events, student requests, or the schedules of guest speakers. The instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

Please note, we have to hold a make-up class due to Presidents Day falling on a Monday. As a result, early in the semester, we'll hold a vote (via a platform like "Doodle") on which date between Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup> and Friday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> to hold the makeup the class. We'll make every effort to accommodate all of our schedules, but will ultimately pick the most popular date. In case of a tie, we'll give preference to the date desired by people who said "yes" to the most proposed times.

Date	In-class Activities	Assignments
<b>WEEK 01</b> <i>Wednesday</i> <i>11 Jan 2017</i>	01a. Introductions 01b. Non-profit Landscape 01c. Why do people support non-profits? 01c. Case for Giving 01d. Assignment: Case for Giving Worksheet	n/a.



Date	In-class Activities	Assignments
MLK Day 16 Jan 2017	No class meeting, due to holiday.	<b>Due:</b> Select a non-profit to "adopt" no later than Tuesday, 17 Jan 2017 at 11:59pm.
WEEK 02 <i>Monday</i> 23 Jan 2017	02a. How do people make decisions? 02b. How do supporters choose which organization to support? 02c. What makes a good case for giving?	n/a.
WEEK 03 <i>Monday</i> 30 Jan 2017	03a. Assignment: Case for Giving Creative and Persuasive Memo 03b. Enthusiasts vs. Consumers 03c. Writing for Conversion 03c. Non-profit Efficiency	<b>Due:</b> Case for Giving Worksheet by Monday, 30 Jan 2017 at 5:20pm.
WEEK 04 <i>Monday</i> 6 Feb 2017	04a. Case for Giving: Worksheet Feedback and Assignment Rubric 04b. Persuasion: The Science Behind Influencing Others 04c. Sample Emails and Creative	n/a.
WEEK 05 <i>Monday</i> 13 Feb 2017	05a. Guest: Robyn Castellani on Behavioral Economics, Storytelling 05b. Assignment: Recreate a Conversion Strategy Worksheet	<b>Due:</b> Case for Giving Creative and Persuasive Memo assignment by Monday, 13 Feb 2017 at 5:20pm.
<i>Presidents Day</i> 20 Feb 2017	No class meeting, due to holiday.	



Date	In-class Activities	Assignments
<b>WEEK 06</b> <i>TBD</i> <i>Make Up Class</i>	06a. Non-profit Audience Segments 06b. Generations and Giving 06c. The Changing Face of the U.S.	n/a.
<b>WEEK 07</b> <i>Monday</i> <i>27 Feb 2017</i>	07a. Conversion-first Communications Planning 07b. Narratives and Stories	n/a.
<i>Spring Break</i> <i>6 Mar 2017</i>	No class meeting, due to break.	n/a.
<b>WEEK 08</b> <i>Monday</i> <i>13 Mar 2017</i>	08a. Assignment: Recreate a Conversion Strategy Paper 08b. Offers and Call to Actions 08c. Ice Bucket Challenge	<b>Due: Recreate a Conversion Strategy Worksheet by</b> Monday, 13 Mar 2017 at 5:20pm.
<b>WEEK 09</b> <i>Monday</i> <i>20 Mar 2017</i>	09a. Recreate a Conversion Strategy: Worksheet Feedback and Assignment Rubric 09b. Creating Compelling Call to Actions 09c. The Supporter Lifecycle	n/a.



Date	In-class Activities	Assignments
<b>WEEK 10</b> <i>Monday 27 Mar 2017</i>	10a. Guest speakers (TBD) on organizational conversion planning. 10b. How Segment/Sector Impacts Campaign Strategy 10c. Assignment: Create a Conversion Campaign Worksheet	<b>Due: Recreate a Conversion Strategy assignment</b> by Monday, 27 Mar 2017 at 5:20pm
<b>WEEK 11</b> <i>Monday 3 Apr 2017</i>	11a. How Does an Organization Choose the Right Tactics? 11b. Begin “Choose Your Own Tactics” Lectures	n/a.
<b>WEEK 12</b> <i>Monday 10 Apr 2017</i>	12a. Assignment: Create a Conversion Campaign Presentation 12b. Continue “Choose Your Own Tactics” Lectures 12b. Evaluating Program Performance	<b>Due: Create a Conversion Campaign Worksheet</b> by Monday, 10 Apr 2017 at 5:20pm
<i>Easter Break 17 Apr 2017</i>	No class meeting, due to holiday.	n/a.
<b>WEEK 13</b> <i>Monday 24 Apr 2017</i>	13a. Create a Conversion Campaign: Worksheet Feedback and Assignment Rubric 13b. Wrap “Choose Your Own Tactics” Lectures	n/a.



Date	In-class Activities	Assignments
<b>WEEK 14</b> <i>Monday</i> <i>01 May 2017</i>	<p>Open salon with guests, including one-on-one strategy sessions for final presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sue Citro, Chief Digital Officer for Best Friends Animal Society.</li><li>• Melissa Wyers, Executive Director for NGP/VAN's EveryAction.</li><li>• Begoña Vazquez-Santos, Director of International Fundraising for The Nature Conservancy.</li></ul>	n/a.
<b>WEEK 15</b> <i>Monday</i> <i>8 May 2017</i>	Create a Conversion Campaign presentations.	<b>Due: Create a Conversion Campaign assignment by Monday, 8 May 2017 at 5:20pm.</b>