



MPPR-780:40 MOBILIZING THE MASSES: GRASSROOTS COMMUNICATIONS
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-Public Relations and Corporate Communications
Monday, 6:00 – 9:35 p.m. | Summer 2017

Instructor: Joseph LaMountain
Downtown campus, room C219

- Office hours are by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The average consumer is bombarded with thousands of messages every single day. Grassroots and word-of-mouth communications can cut through the clutter, make your message stick, and persuade people to act. Grassroots is the oldest form of communications and the most effective. But many marketing and communications professionals overlook proven, inexpensive, grassroots communications strategies. We'll discuss the history of grassroots, the theories behind it all, and develop "how-to" tactics that can help any company, cause or candidate succeed.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will:

- Understand the history and theory of grassroots communications
- Identify what makes grassroots communications effective
- Develop grassroots communications objectives, strategies and tactics
- Evaluate the effectiveness of grassroots campaigns
- Envision possible futures for grassroots communications

RECOMMENDED READING

- Alter, Jonathan, *The Center Holds: Obama and His Enemies*. Simon and Schuster, New York, 2013, ISBN 1451646070, \$17.
- Cialdini, R., *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Collins Business, New York, 2007, ISBN 006124189X, \$17.99.
- Gladwell, M., *The Tipping Point*, Little, Brown and Company, New York, 2002, ISBN 0316346624, \$15.99.
- Luntz, F., *Words that Work*, Hyperion, New York, 2007, ISBN 1401309291, \$15.99.
- McKenna, E. and Han, H., *Groundbreakers*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2014, ISBN 9780199394593, \$19.95 (expensive in print, Kindle version is \$9.95).

Please note that all readings are *optional*, but recommended. Reading the materials in advance will enable better class discussions, but we will also cover the key learnings from each book during lecture. In addition to the books listed above, additional readings will be recommended during the semester (some of which are detailed in the course schedule). Please note that these books can be purchased online for much less than the listed price.

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 – or if you will be late, please text or call me at 202.288.5124.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

I try not to be doctrinaire about the use of electronic devices in class, especially laptops, because many students use them to take notes. But a successful class depends on the active engagement of all students, so please turn off all cell phones, pagers (does anyone use a pager anymore?) or other communication devices while in class. If you need to check email, text, Facebook or IM with friends, please wait until the break or after class.

Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions. Like Vegas, what happens in class stays in class unless you receive permission from the instructor to share something. In addition, please consider the following:

- Readings in any given week correspond to the discussion that week. In other words, be prepared to discuss the readings that are for that week's class in the schedule.
- Assignments must be submitted electronically
- Late work will be dropped one grade for each day it is late. If you have extenuating circumstances speak with me before the due date. Work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date.
- I will not offer incomplete grades save in the most exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances. Job requirements do not qualify.
- Grammar, spelling and proper citations matter. Your ideas matter more.
- You are responsible for classroom information. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with your classmates to get class notes.

ASSIGNMENTS

I. Class Participation (25 points)

Students are expected to complete the readings and participate in our discussions. This is not a "lecture" class, but one that relies on your participation. Participants will receive a grade based on the "quantity" of your involvement and the "quality" of your comments and remarks.

II. Reaction Paper #1 (50 points)

The Reaction Paper #1 is due by week 3. It should be 2-3 pages and examine the grassroots communications elements of a current event or a topic of interest to you. For example, you might want to examine the role of grassroots communications in the runaway success of a new product or some aspect of your professional work. Your assignment is not to restate the event, but to analyze the situation, discuss the role of grassroots communications (or lack thereof) and provide arguments based on what you have learned in class.

III. Reaction Paper #2 (50 points)

The Reaction Paper #2 is due by week 7. It should be a one-page strategic plan outline that includes the SMART objective, strategies and tactics for a grassroots communications campaign. For



example, you might want to break down the way in which Apple is using word-of-mouth marketing to sell its products. Or you could examine the ways in which Greenpeace is using grassroots communications to address climate change. Or you might want to use something you're focusing on at work. It's up to you.

IV. Group Project (75 points)

We will develop a tactic that can be implemented by assigned teams. In the past, teams have collected 100 responses of a brief survey. Each team will theorize, in advance, on the best way(s) to maximize compliance with the request to complete a survey and present their theories to the class. During the week of August 7, teams will execute their plans (we will not have a class session that day). Finally, on August 14, each group will submit their final report and present their findings to the class.

The final group assignment should be 3-4 pages, state what you were attempting to learn (the theory) and its relevance to grassroots communications, how you will measure success and what your actual results were after our field work. Each group presentation should be 15-20 minutes in duration. The written paper will account for 2/3 of the team's grade while the group presentation will account for 1/3 of the team's grade.

V. Individual Proposal (100 points)

The Individual Proposal is a 5- to 7-page strategic plan proposal addressed to a candidate, organization or company. The proposal will analyze an issue currently affecting the target organization and offer a comprehensive solution along with suggested strategies and tactics. The Individual Proposal is due by August 21.

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Assignment	Due	Points
Class Participation	Weekly	25
Reaction paper #1	Week 3	50
Reaction Paper #2	Week 7	50
Group Project	Week 12	75
Individual Proposal	August 21	100
Total		300

Evaluation criteria for each assignment will be discussed in class.

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 279-300
- A- 270-278.9
- B+ 261-269.9



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

- B 249-260.9
- B- 240-248.9
- C 210-239.9
- F 209.9 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. My goal is for every student to receive an A as that demonstrates to me a master of the material in class. I will work with any student to help achieve that grade; I won't do your work for you, but the amount of work you put into this class certainly influences your 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
<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/>

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://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 journalism, 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 Honor Council at <http://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/>. 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
WEEK 1 May 22	What is this Course all about? We will review the syllabus and class policies and discuss what we mean by grassroots communications. We will examine elements of the 2008 and 2012 Obama presidential campaigns. We will also share our backgrounds and personal interests and what we expect to learn from taking this course. Finally, we will form semester-long work groups and kick-off the semester with (drum roll, please) The Postcard Project. Reading Due: <i>The Center Holds</i> , pages 83-111
WEEK 2 June 5	Can Mr. Smith get to Washington Anymore? We will watch a documentary that follows the 2004 campaign of Jeff Smith, a young political science instructor at Washington University who runs for the seat vacated by retiring congressman Dick Gephardt. Using grassroots communications tactics, Smith proves that an unknown with no money can make a difference. We will also watch <i>Berkeley vs. Big Soda</i> , which highlights how advocates can use the tactics of politicians to affect social change.
WEEK 3 June 12	History and Origins of Grassroots Communications We will examine grassroots communications throughout history, from candidates, companies and causes. We will discuss what they have in common, and what differentiates the good from the bad, the importance of body language and nonverbal communications, and how technology has impacted our ability to communicate with one another over time. We may



	<p>even have time for a quick game of charades.</p> <p>Assignment due: Reaction paper #1</p>
WEEK 4 June 19	<p>Grassroots Bar Crawl 4.0 (#GRBC2016)</p> <p>In this activity, working groups will conduct on-the-ground research and audits of local business and how they are using, or not using, grassroots strategies and tactics to achieve their business objectives. Groups will then present their findings to the class upon our return.</p>
WEEK 5 June 26	<p>Current Thinking in Grassroots Communications</p> <p>How do ideas and information spread? What is the basic reason for grassroots communications? Are new technologies enhancing, or hindering, our ability to communicate? Why and how are businesses starting to use it?</p> <p>Reading due: <i>The Tipping Point</i>, pages 3-169 (skimming is OK)</p>
WEEK 6 July 3	<p>Strategic Planning: Objectives, Strategies and Tactics</p> <p>This is the most important class of the semester. If you can create a successful strategic plan outline, you will do well in your marketing and communications career. We will discuss the differences between objectives, strategies and tactics and why are they critical to the success of your communications plan.</p>
WEEK 7 July 10	<p>Candidates, Companies and Causes: The Grassroots Way</p> <p>Politicians, through political campaigns, have mastered the art of effective grassroots communication. We'll discuss how to organize and execute a successful campaign for elective office. We'll also examine how companies and causes are using the same grassroots electoral strategies (or not) to achieve their business objectives.</p> <p>Reading due: Groundbreakers (pages TBD):</p> <p>Assignment due: Reaction paper #2</p>
WEEK 8 July 17	<p>Research and Audience Targeting</p> <p>If I hear one more person say "we need to raise public awareness" about our cause, I will scream. You do not need to reach all 321,598,458 Americans, but a certain select subset. And the smaller the better. We'll discuss the research that goes into identifying an audience and understanding what motivates them act and spread the word to others.</p>
WEEK 9 July 24	<p>Developing a Winning Sticky Message Platform</p> <p>Words have the power to motivate and inspire. When developing a message platform, you need to consider carefully the power of the words. What are you trying to say? Who are you trying to reach and influence? How can you create a concise, clear message while retaining flexibility?</p> <p>Readings due: (1) <i>Made to Stick</i>, pages 1-24 and 195-199 (to be provided electronically) and (2) <i>Words that Work</i>, pages 1-33.</p>



<p>WEEK 10 July 31</p>	<p>Developing Grassroots Strategies and Tactics Grassroots is all about the call to action, or getting someone to take a specific action. We will discuss how to develop engaging strategies, but also how we can use some completely ethical psychological trickery to increase the likelihood that someone will act the way we want.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> (1) <i>Influence</i>, pages 1-56 (and skim 57-280).</p> <p>Assignment due: Group theory and predictions</p>
<p>WEEK 11 August 7</p>	<p>Field Exercise: Implementation of Research Projects During this time, you will interact directly with members of the public and attempt to collect 100 completed questionnaires through face-to-face conversations. You will test your theories and report and discuss findings and report results the following week. <u>Note:</u> This is an independent exercise that can be implemented any time this week. We will not meet on August 7.</p>
<p>WEEK 12 August 14</p>	<p>Presentations: Grassroots Field Project Results Groups will present, and the class will discuss, the results and findings of their field projects. We will also review and discuss the collective survey results and measure them against previous semesters activities. We will spend the remainder of the class developing a strategic plan in response to a prospective client RFP. We will also summarize the key points of the semester and watch <i>How to Survive a Plague</i>. This documentary highlights the early days of the AIDS movement and how they changed American history.</p> <p>Assignment due: Final group project</p>
<p>August 21</p>	<p>Assignment due: Individual proposal</p>