MPPR-505-02: ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-Public Relations and Corporate Communications
Monday, 8:00 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. | Spring 2015

Instructor: Shelva Clemons, MA
Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

Mastering communications planning is similar to laying the foundation for your dream home – it requires an investment but if completed with care, all the other pieces easily fall in to place. In this course, you will learn the Georgetown model for step-by-step communications planning – a building block for success in MPS PR/CC and in your career. The model generates proven results by illuminating the research, creative discovery, and strategies you will consider on your road to becoming a successful communications leader. Every element of the framework builds on the last; starting with research and insight, moving through situational analysis, goals, objectives, strategies, tactics and evaluation. You will learn how to identify key publics, create targeted messaging, build budgets, and convey timelines. The course focuses on each of the elements in-depth and provides opportunities for practice and ultimately mastery.

At the end of the course, you will understand the planning model as a framework for thinking about strategic communication. You will also be able to apply your reasoning skills to figure out a range of communications challenges and effectively explain your decision making to peers, superiors and clients. This course will prepare you to respond confidently and creatively to the rigors of your capstone experience, coursework, and professional environments.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Each student can expect to cultivate their ability to envision and write insightful communications plans. To reach this goal you will:

• Understand and internalize the principles of the Georgetown planning model/framework
• Customize and confidently apply elements of the framework to various communications challenges
• Develop analytical reasoning skills in order to assess and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of a proposed plan
• Explain, outline and write strategic communications plans, one of which will be portfolio-ready

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY
This course is designed to help you answer the question: How can I become an effective and insightful communications strategist and planner? You will be asked to consider your decision making processes and think critically about how the Georgetown model/framework will shape and be shaped by your personal strengths and interests. Thus, the course is interactive and requires your commitment to becoming an effective strategist. Throughout the semester, we will all model fair assessment, respect, discourse, encouragement, self-reflection, listening, and critical learning skills.

Each week, you will build on your knowledge by grappling with a new topic, discussing the readings, and applying what you’ve learned/developed to practical activities and assignments. At the start of each class, weekly learning objectives will be provided to help you gauge your progress in real time. We will also have a number of formal and informal assessments to help us identify any areas for further discussion and practice.

Insightful communications planning is a skill you will develop over the span of your career; your growth will not end at the close of this course. Think of this class and the Georgetown framework as your foundation for becoming a confident and critical planner. The model/framework presented here is not the only method, rather it is a proven starting point for considering key questions and unearthing the impact of communications planning and the elusive big idea.

At the close of this course you will be confident in your developing strategic planning skill and have a framework (and toolkit) to effectively respond to communications challenges with professionalism and creativity.

Work Submitted/Presented
All typed text should be in 12-point font, double-spaced and referenced following AP style guidelines. For assignments that require references, please use APA to include your references and citations to avoid plagiarism. Please include your name, the assignment title, page numbers and the date on all written submissions. Please bring a hard copy of your assignment to class the night it is due. In all that you do, remember that grammar, spelling and style are important to your ability to be a strategic and effective communicator. Please refer to the recommended reading section for additional resources. We will discuss grading criteria for all major assignments prior to the assignment due date so we have a common understanding of expectations.

Work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Late work will be dropped one grade for each day it is late (for example, an A will shift to a B). If you are not present for an in class activity, no makeup will be given, except in cases of documented emergencies. If you have extenuating circumstances or need special accommodations, please see me before the due date, and I will do my best to accommodate you.

Course Policies
• Please silence your cell phones and do not check websites related to other topics while in class.
• I will not offer incomplete grades, except in the most exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances. Job requirements do not qualify.
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. All class PowerPoint slides will be posted in Blackboard.

Please bring your full range of life experience to the content of this course. We will use popular culture, current news, business literature, persuasion and social influence theory, social media, metacognitive theories, and more, to bring the Georgetown framework to life.

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.

Given the length of this class session, we will have two 15-minute breaks each evening.

REQUIRED READING
*Strategic communications planning for effective public relations and marketing* (5th ed.).
Wilson, L., & Ogden, J.
ISBN: 9780757548871
2008
$55.92

*Positioning: The battle for your mind.*
Reis, A. & Trout, J.
2001
$11.53

***The instructors will also assign specific articles to read as part of the homework. Students must be prepared to discuss any of those assigned readings in class.***

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 – you must let the instructors know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.
CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off all cell phones, pagers 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 instructor to share something.
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 two weeks after the assignment was turned in. I will always be available to discuss feedback on assignments. All grading criteria, including page length and essential content, will be distributed in advance and discussed in class.

Weekly Readings

Be prepared to discuss the assigned reading in class. Arrive prepared with at least two comments or questions that arose while you were reading. These questions could be specific to the reading or current topic, or the questions could relate the overarching question and learning objectives of the course. Remember to apply the strategic framework we are learning in class to evaluate and respond to your readings.

Written Reflections

As noted in the schedule, you will be asked to provide two brief, written reflections on the course and its content throughout the semester. These discussions will support the creation of your planning toolkit. For example, you could create comments including the following: a summary of a concept we discussed in class that helped further your understanding of strategy; a reflection on the planning process; news or campaign examples and your analysis of their intentions; or questions regarding a planning topic with which you are grappling.

Your written reflections will relate to your creation of a personalized planning toolkit. You and your colleagues are encouraged to develop a planning toolkit during the semester within a checklist outlining the characteristics of a strong communications plan (which you will receive in hard copy and via email). You will receive a copy of the checklist on the first day of class and are encouraged to add your notes from the semester into an electronic copy of the checklist to create a planning toolkit for your future use in the profession. You may be asked to share your written reflection with the class as part of group discussions.

You will leave the course having created a document you can reference throughout your career and in MPS PR/CC, complete with customized definitions and examples you select (from the blog discussions and in-class sessions) specific to your first introduction to communications planning.

Class Discussion – 10 points

Success in this class is dependent on active participation in discussion. Our goal is not to memorize and conform strictly to the Georgetown planning model, rather we want to understand and internalize the framework to guide our critical thinking and creative, strategic planning. You will commit to your own
learning experience and teach your colleagues through conversation. I expect you to be considerate and respectful of others’ ideas, words and efforts. I especially value contributions to our discussions that:

- Show clear understanding of the readings and subject at hand
- Apply a framework or criteria for analyzing a topic
- Help make connections among ideas, readings, or experiences we discuss

**Partnered Presentations – 50 points**

Each week, students will be asked to apply the previous week’s lesson to a current event in the news or a recent campaign. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure students understand important concepts, discuss real-time examples of ideas, and to provide a forum for raising additional questions. This activity will help you in communicating your strategic plans in the future, as you will need to explain complex information in a compressed timeline often throughout your career.

Students will choose one date during the semester to give a team summary of an event/issue/campaign and discuss its relevance to the previous week’s lesson. As a team, you will present an idea, tool, or concept related to public relations or strategic communications planning. For example, topics could include a new digital platform, communications resource, or campaign. **Your presentation will be worth 45 points and span 25 minutes, including Q&A.** Your colleagues will provide feedback on your presentation.

**Assignments (4) – 40 points**

This course is designed to offer opportunities to practice the planning model in different contexts. The assignments will allow you to apply the planning elements to your final project, while in class activities will allow you to apply what you’re learning to different organizations and business settings. After completing a reading, lecture, and in-class activity related to a planning element, you will complete an assignment designed to crystallize the concept through practical application. It is essential that you complete your reading and assignments, in order to fully engage in class discussions. You will use your assignments as a basis for identifying creative ideas with your peers and brainstorming for your final plan.

**Plan Outline – 100 points**

In preparation for the final plan, students will complete a **6 - 8 page communications plan outline.** You will develop the outline based on the RFP you select at the beginning of the semester. You will be provided with a grading rubric and specific questions to direct you in completing this assignment. In this assignment you will use short paragraphs, bulleted lists, and response sections to convey your insights, considerations and strategic thinking about your final plan. A separate response section asking why you would present your written plan in the order submitted in the outline will garner extra credit. **You will also submit at least 10 of your 25 references you will use in the final plan.**

**Peer Review (best 2 out of 3 peer review grades) – 50 points**

Your course schedule includes checkpoints throughout the semester where you will be expected to bring in printed sections of your plan for peer discussion and review. Your colleague will complete a peer
review sheet, which evaluates your preparedness for in-class peer review and discussion. This format is intended to help you develop your individual communications plan over the course of the entire semester with group input and sufficient feedback during the process.

**Final Plan – 200 points**

Your final assignment will be to write a **15 page, portfolio-ready strategic communications plan** using the framework you learned throughout the semester. You will receive detailed grading criteria prior to the assignment due date, so you know exactly what to include and how each element will be graded. The plans must be based on the RFP you select at the beginning of the semester, and be written based on the plan outline assignment you complete earlier in the semester.

**GRADING**

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Discussion &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnered Presentations</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan Outline</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Plan</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>450</strong></td>
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The instructors 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/](http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/)

- **Academic Resource Center**
  202-687-8354 | arc@georgetown.edu
  [http://ldss.georgetown.edu/](http://ldss.georgetown.edu/)

- **Counseling and Psychiatric Services**
  202-687-6985
  [http://caps.georgetown.edu/](http://caps.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](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 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.