GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Georgetown University, MPS PR/CC | Spring 2015
MPPR-505-05: Elements of Communications Planning

Class Meets: Fridays, 5:20 – 7:50 pm
Class Location: 640 Mass Ave | Room: C-220

Professor: Prof. Alexandra M. Merceron
Office Hours: Arranged by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
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.

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

1. Understand and internalize the principles of the Georgetown planning model/framework
2. Customize and confidently apply elements of the framework to various communications challenges
3. Develop analytical reasoning skills in order to assess and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of a proposed plan
4. 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 a proven approach for considering key questions and building communications solutions. At the close of this course you will be confident in your strategic planning skill and have a framework to effectively respond to communications challenges with professionalism and creativity.

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.

If you encounter any special circumstances at any point in the semester, it is imperative that you discuss them with me immediately. My contact information and office hours are located at the beginning of this syllabus. My door is always open – if you are experiencing an academic difficulty or life circumstance please let me know early in the challenge so we can identify a solution.

WORK SUBMITTED
All typed text should be no bigger than 12-point font, double-spaced and referenced following AP style guidelines. 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, unless instructed otherwise. 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. Quizzes can be made-up but only at the beginning of the next immediate class. In general, 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, and more, to bring the Georgetown framework to life. As you will see, there is a class participation component to your grade.
- 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, book excerpts, case studies, multimedia, RFPs and two key books. The readings are chosen to give you a solid foundation for understanding and internalizing the Georgetown planning framework and opportunities to apply the model to real world examples.

ISBN: 9780757548871 | $55.92


All articles, book excerpts, cases, and multimedia listed on the course schedule will be distributed in advance, via the class Blackboard 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


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.

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

Planning Discussions (5 “Blog” Posts) – 15 points
As noted in the schedule, you will be asked to provide five brief, written reflections on the course and its content throughout the semester. These discussions will live online in Blackboard. The planning discussion will be developed by you and your classmates in response to current events, “real life” communications challenges and examples in your professional life that demonstrate the central lessons of this course. For example, you could create posts 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. Posts should be no fewer than 250 words. You are allowed to post in response to a classmate’s post as long as you do not have duplicative reflections.

Class Discussion – 20 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 the framework so that it guides our critical thinking and creative, strategic planning. You will commit to your own learning experience and teach your colleagues through conversation. Everyone in the course will be graded each time you are present in class and contribute to the class discussion; an average of class participation scores for each class will determine your final class participation grade. 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

Each week, students will be asked to apply the previous week’s lesson to a current event in the news or a recent campaign. Every student will choose at least one date during the semester to give a summary of an event/issue/campaign and discuss its relevance to the previous week’s lesson. 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.

Quizzes (4 quizzes) – 20 points
You will have four in-class quizzes on key topics in the schedule throughout the semester. These will be formatted to assess your ability to: (1) define concepts; (2) differentiate between terms; (3) apply/combine elements; (4) explain your decision making process; and (5) evaluate use of the planning model. The quizzes will allow us to identify areas for further discussion and strengthen your analytical skills. You will be permitted to make-up missed quizzes the following week if you will not be able to attend class.

Assignments (4 assignments) – 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 – 50 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 and bulleted lists 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) – 20 points
Your course schedule includes checkpoints throughout the semester where you will be expected to bring in elements of your final plan for peer discussion and review. Your final plan grade will include your highest 2 of out of 3 peer grades, which reflect your preparedness for in-class peer review and discussion. This format is intended to help you develop your final plan over the course of the entire semester with group input and sufficient feedback during the process.

Final Plan – 110 points
Your final assignment will be to write a 15-30 (max) 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
Planning discussion: 15 points
Class discussion: 20 points
Quizzes: 20 points
Assignments: 40 points
Outline: 50 points
Peer Review: 20 points
Final Plan: 110 points
Total: 275 points

A: 259 – 275 points
A-: 248 – 258 points
B+: 242 – 247 points
B: 231 – 241 points
B-: 220 – 230 points
C: 193 – 219 points
F: 192 points and below

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/

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 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE/TOPIC</th>
<th>READING DUE</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT DUE</th>
<th>IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1  Jan 9, 2015</td>
<td>Review Syllabus posted on Blackboard</td>
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<td>Discussion: Class introductions, background survey, Blackboard tutorial and discussion about the value of planning in strategic communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Overview &amp; Introduction to Planning Elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 2  Jan 16, 2015</td>
<td>Wilson &amp; Ogden pp. 36 – 47</td>
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<td>Discussion: Methods for primary and secondary research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>You should have already ordered your texts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 3  Jan 23, 2015</td>
<td>Wilson &amp; Ogden pp. 50 – 68</td>
<td>Assignment 1: Identify secondary research sources</td>
<td>Presenters: TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research as a Planning Tool</td>
<td>See e-reading on Blackboard: *Monahan: Do-it-yourself Lobotomy</td>
<td>Benchmark: Choose your RFP and begin your research</td>
<td>Quiz 1: Research methods</td>
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<td>*Segal: Perfect Brainstorm</td>
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<td>Discussion: The big idea vs. insight and considerations</td>
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| **Class 4**
Jan 30, 2015**
**Goal, Objectives & Key Publics** | Wilson & Ogden pp. 72 – 81, 84 – 94
Reis and Trout 143 – 152 and 183 - 191 | Assignment 2: Read the case study and identify 3 key insights for class discussion
Planning Discussion: Post Discussion 1 on Blackboard
Benchmark: Begin drafting goal, objectives and key publics for final plan | Presenters: TBD
Quiz 2: Insight/research as a planning tool
Discussion: Identifying sound goals; also, finding your target audiences and hitting the bull’s eye |
| **Class 5**
Feb 6, 2015**
**Practical Application & Analysis** | Reis & Trout pp. 1-84, 193-210
See e-reading on Blackboard:
*Kawasaki: Branding
*Kawasaki: Frame | Assignment 3: Bring in an outline of your background, goal and objectives to class | Presenters: TBD
Peer review 1: Discuss Assignment 3
Discussion: Key learnings and best practices from planning and review sample plans in teams |
| **Class 6**
Feb 13, 2015**
**Introduction to Branding, Framing & Message Design** | Reis & Trout pp. 1-84, 193-210
See e-reading on Blackboard:
*Kawasaki: Branding
*Kawasaki: Frame | Planning Discussion: Post Discussion 2 on Blackboard
Benchmark: Continue research on Key Publics
This is a heavy reading week – judge your time in advance to complete the readings | Presenters: TBD
Quiz 3: Goal, objectives and key publics
Discussion: Avoiding brand and message dissonance |
| **Class 7**
Feb 20, 2015**
**Messaging** | See e-reading on Blackboard:
*Duncan: Principles
*Leet: Message Matters | Assignment 4: Bring in brand positioning, framing cues and draft messaging to class | Presenters: TBD
Peer review 2: Discuss Assignment 4
Discussion: Crafting message platforms |
| **Class 8**
Feb 27, 2015**
**Strategies, Tactics** | Wilson & Ogden pp. 102 – 127
See e-reading on Blackboard:
*Scott: Baby Dinosaur
*I’m w/ Suzy | Planning Discussion: Post Discussion 3 on Blackboard | Presenters: TBD
Discussion: Brainstorming and applying insight to strategies and tactics |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 9</td>
<td>Wilson &amp; Ogden pp. 136 – 144, 146 – 152</td>
<td>Plan Outline Due in Class: See syllabus and grading criteria</td>
<td>Presenters: TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 6, 2015</td>
<td>Calendars, Budgeting, Implementation</td>
<td>Benchmark: You should be working on strategies and tactics by this point</td>
<td>Discussion: Being on time and on budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 10</td>
<td>Wilson &amp; Ogden pp. 154 – 160</td>
<td>Benchmark: You should have a draft plan up to the Calendar and Budget sections</td>
<td>Time with your Prof. in person or by phone to discuss your final plan (10 minutes/each) and in-class workshop.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 20, 2015</td>
<td>Final Plan Workshop</td>
<td>completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 11</td>
<td>Wilson &amp; Ogden pp. 163 – 169</td>
<td>Planning Discussion: Post Discussion 4 on Blackboard</td>
<td>Presenters: TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 27, 2015</td>
<td>Measurement &amp; Evaluation</td>
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<td>Quiz 4: Strategies and tactics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 12</td>
<td>Wilson &amp; Ogden pp. 163 – 169</td>
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<td>Discussion: The importance of measurement and showing impact in communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 10, 2015</td>
<td>Writing the Plan &amp; Executive Summaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 13</td>
<td>See e-reading on Blackboard: *Kawasaki: Executive Summary</td>
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<td>Presenters: TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 17, 2015</td>
<td>Creative Materials</td>
<td>Due in Class: Bring your draft final plan to class for discussion</td>
<td>Discussion: Best practices in writing and presentations; review more sample plans in teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 14</td>
<td>Wilson &amp; Ogden pp. 163 – 169</td>
<td>Planning Discussion: Post Discussion 5 on Blackboard</td>
<td>Presenters: TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 24, 2015</td>
<td>Creative Materials</td>
<td>Benchmark: You should be working on measurement, evaluation, and brining your plan to life with creative materials</td>
<td>Discussion: Bringing your plan to life with visuals and creative materials</td>
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<td>Applied Planning</td>
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<td>new business pitches</td>
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<td>Class 15</td>
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<td>Final Plan Due in Class:</td>
<td>Discussion: Strengths and pitfalls of the framework and marketing yourself!</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1, 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td>See syllabus and grading criteria for details</td>
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<td>Pitching the Plan, Future Planning</td>
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