



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
School of Continuing Studies  
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

## **MPPR-755-01: DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

### **GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-Public Relations and Corporate Communications**

Tuesdays, 8 PM – 10:30 PM | Spring 2015

Instructor: J. David Almacý  
Downtown campus, Room C123  
Office hours by appointment

#### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course will provide students with a general understanding and working knowledge of digital communications strategies and tactics for the modern business environment. Students will learn to approach various communications challenges in an integrated fashion by leveraging digital channels to augment and enhance traditional public relations and marketing tactics. The course will survey emerging and existing technologies and teach students how to best use these sites and interact with online communities on both a personal and professional level. The class will highlight specific digital case studies, encourage hands-on participation and offer an analysis of effective online communication and internet strategies.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Students will learn how to analyze complex public relations and communications challenges, create digital solutions and provide strategic counsel.
- Develop comprehensive strategies designed to best integrate digital tactics into traditional communications plans.
- Gain an in depth understanding of the modern media landscape and evolving communications practices in an effort to gain strategic competitive advantage.
- Develop a familiarity of effective online tools and methods such as content development, online community building, engagement strategy, search engine optimization, monitoring, measurement, interpreting analytics, mobile communications, video, etc.
- Review effective digital and integrated campaign case studies to highlight best practices and draw parallels for coursework.

#### **REQUIRED READING**

There will be regular assignments focused on various digital communications. Beyond the assigned readings, I strongly encourage you to read the following blogs on a regular basis:

Mashable (<http://mashable.com>)

TechCrunch (<http://techcrunch.com>)

CNET news (<http://news.cnet.com/digital-media>)

Read/Write Web (<http://readwrite.com>)

eMarketer (<http://www.emarketer.com/Articles>)

TWiT: This Week in Tech (<http://twit.tv>)

In addition to the weekly web reading, social media monitoring, watching and listening, there are also readings from the required texts listed below.

- *The New Rules of Marketing & PR: How to Use Social Media, Online Video, Mobile Applications, Blogs, News Releases, and Viral Marketing to Reach Buyers Directly*  
by David Meerman Scott (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 4th edition, July 1, 2013)  
ISBN: 978-1118488768 (\$13 on Amazon)  
<http://www.davidmeermanscott.com/books/the-new-rules-of-marketing-and-pr/>
- *Winning the Zero Moment of Truth*  
Jim Lecinski, Google  
<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/collections/zero-moment-truth.html>  
ZMOT Handbook: <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/research-studies/2012-zmot-handbook.html>

These required texts will be supplemented by timely news articles, blog posts or current events throughout the semester.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. In the event that you must miss class, please notify me as soon as possible. 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. The use of mobile devices such as smartphones or tablets in class is prohibited unless specifically related to current lessons or coursework. Otherwise, please turn these off before class starts. On occasion, we will have guest speakers. They will certainly appreciate this, as well.

During class discussions, opinions are welcomed and viewpoints are encouraged as long as expressed constructively and respectfully. What happens in class stays in class unless you receive permission from the instructor to share something.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Your assignments should meet Georgetown University's standard of excellence. There are three writing assignments for this class:

1. Digital Diagnosis – Select a company or organization with which you have some familiarity. Visit their website and evaluate it based on your personal point of view. Type out three to five bullet points of both likes and dislikes from a digital standpoint. Be prepared to discuss in class from additional target audience perspectives based on messaging and/or key business objectives.
2. Digital Footprint – Use the Internet (search engines) to research and compile information about an individual or organization. Compose a brief memo outlining some of the findings and general themes about them online, both positive and negative, from external sources such as blogs, news sites,

competitors, etc. Provide general recommendations on how to positively influence their current digital presence.

3. Final Project – The class will be divided into groups. Each will be responsible for producing a final project that will consist of a paper and a group presentation which will be delivered during the last class or two of the semester. More details will be made available as the semester progresses.

Please follow these guidelines for your work:

- Include student name, course number and assignment title
- Double spaced work
- Cite references; refer to APA Style for Electronic Media ([www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org))
- Either hand in your assignment at the beginning of class or email it before 6 PM on the day it is due to [david.almacy@gmail.com](mailto:david.almacy@gmail.com) with the subject line: [Last Name]: MPPR 755 Class Assignment [mm/dd/yy]

Late work will not be accepted.

### **Class Social Network Contribution (Twitter Links)**

Each week as you login and participate online, you will be asked to post links to relevant websites, blogs, items of interest, news developments, etc. to Twitter using the class's hashtag, #mppr755. You will be asked to subscribe to our class Twitter list, Georgetown MPPR755 SPR15. The first to correctly answer my (occasional) Twitter trivia questions will be awarded additional points that will be factored into class participation scores.

### **GRADING**

Your course grade will be based on the following:

80 points = Assignments & Presentations

30 points = Class Social Network Contribution

30 points = Class Participation

60 points = Final Project Presentation

**200 points = Total**

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

The grading scale will be assigned accordingly:

A	100 – 93	B–	82.99 – 80
A–	92.99 – 90	C	79.99 – 70
B+	89.99 – 88	F	69.99 – 0
B	87.99 – 83		

A warning will be provided 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/>
- 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/>

## 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 at (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 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\***

- 1/13/15 Class #1 – Overview**  
Overview of class expectations, assignments  
Reading: New Rules, Chapters 1, 2
- 1/20/15 Class #2 – 1's & 0's: Building Blocks of the Internet**  
Understanding the foundational elements of website development  
Reading: New Rules, Chapters 3, 4, 5
- 1/27/15 Class #3 – Blogs and Bloggers**  
The evolution of personal and corporate blogs, writing for the web  
Reading: New Rules, Chapters 6, 8, 9, 18, 19
- 2/3/15 Class #4 – Content that Drives Engagement**  
How to strategically create digital content with purpose  
Reading: New Rules, Chapters 7, 20, 21
- 2/10/15 Class #5 – Media Relations: Cloverleaf & Sponsored Content**  
Shrinking newsrooms, growing digital opportunities  
Reading: New Rules, Chapters 22, 23
- 2/17/15 Class #6 – Online Advertising**  
Augmenting earned and organic reach through cutting edge digital ad platforms  
Reading: New Rules, Chapter 24
- 2/24/15 Class #7 – The Power of Search**  
Optimizing content to increase visibility at the point of inquiry  
Reading: New Rules, Chapters 10, 11
- 3/3/15 Class #8 – Political Campaigns**  
Campaigning in the digital age  
Reading: New Rules, Chapters 12, 13, 14
- 3/10/15 No Class – Spring Break**
- 3/17/15 Class #9 – Dot Gov & Dot Mil**  
The history of governing online and a look at key issues such as privacy and security  
Reading: Zero Moment of Truth
- 3/24/15 Class #10 – Crisis Communications**  
Best practices for digital engagement in the midst of a crisis  
Reading: New Rules, Chapters 15, 16
- 3/31/15 Class #11 – Mobile**  
Leveraging mobile technology and geo-location data  
Reading: New Rules, Chapters 17, 25

**4/7/15 Class #12 – Monitoring, Measurement, Metrics**

Understanding and properly interpreting digital analytics

Assignment: Final Project

**4/14/15 Class #13 – The Road Ahead**

Trends and bold predictions about the future of digital communications

Assignment: Final Project

**4/21/15 Class #14 – Final Project presentations**

**4/28/15 No Class – Study Days**

**5/5/15 Class #15 – Final Project presentations**

\* This syllabus will be subject to change to reflect real time digital case studies and current events. Also, there may be possible schedule conflicts due to speaker availability and/or travel.