



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Georgetown University
MPS Public Relations & Corporate Communications Program
640 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington DC 20001

Course: Media Relations / MPPR 710-01

CRN# 29455

Instructor: Prof. Alexandra M. Merceron

Office Hours: Arranged by appointment.

Class Meets: Thursdays, 5:20pm to 7:50pm

Location: Room C-121 **Term:** Fall 2015

Course Description: This course is designed to help you better understand the role and practice of media relations and messaging in corporate, non-profit, and government organizations in this new media era. You will learn how to research media and reporters, develop messages, build strategic media plans, generate media coverage, serve as spokespeople, handle crisis situations, and use new media strategies. You will hear from media and public relations professionals on such topics as working with reporters, developing PR campaigns, and creating effective web outreach programs. Class discussions, reading assignments, research and writing projects, group projects, and case studies offer an engaging and interactive learning environment to expand and apply your knowledge of media relations and messaging.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the term, you will be able to:

- Practice media relations in a range of organizational settings
- Plan, implement and manage media and new media programs
- Develop messages and build conversations with target audiences
- Identify and cultivate key media relationships
- Conduct media interviews with print, broadcast and online outlets
- Sharpen your critical thinking and communication skills

Attendance: Attendance is necessary for success in this class. If you miss more than two classes, your final grade will drop a grade level (from a B to a B-). Special circumstances (i.e. documented illness, death in the family, religious observances) should be discussed with me immediately to receive consideration. In the event you need to miss a class, please notify the instructor by e-mail prior to the start of the class. It will be your responsibility to get the day's class notes from another classmate. Please note that work-related issues and work-related scheduling conflicts are not considered special circumstances.

Email/Correspondence: Email is the preferred mode of communication with your professor. Any email sent within business hours will receive a response with 24 hours. Please include the course name (Media Relations) in your subject line. Homework assignments are only accepted via email when specified on an assignment description sheet. For email submission of homework, please include the course name and assignment number in the subject line (i.e. Media Relations HW4)

Work Submitted and Presented: Assignments are expected to be of professional, “executive-ready” quality and submitted on time. All assignments will be completed individually with grades individually awarded (i.e., no group grades); however, peer input will be used to help provide real-world feedback and a diversity of perspectives. Assignments will be evaluated for content and presentation. Assignments should be submitted in hard copy form, at the start of class (8:00p) on the day it is due. Late work will lose one letter grade per day it is late. If you are to miss a class, you must still turn in assignments due that day, by email by 8:00p. Extenuating circumstances should be discussed ahead of time to receive consideration; however, job demands will not warrant extensions.

Required Reading: Weekly reading will be assigned and/or posted in Blackboard, as indicated on the syllabus. The required textbook for this course is:

Howard, C. M., & Mathews, W. K. (2013). *On deadline: Managing media relations, 5th Edition*. Waveland Press. (ISBN: 9781478603405; PRICE: \$31.95)

Suggested reading/viewing: Your choice of regular readings from relevant papers, blogs, periodicals, and Industry Literature, including The Washington Post, Politico. The New York Times Sunday edition A-section, Week in Review, op-ed section, The New York Times, USA Today, The Daily Beast, Huffington Post, Wall Street Journal, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, MSNBC, CNN, National Public Radio, Fox News and various Sunday morning talk shows.

Class Participation & Weekly News Digests: The success of the class depends in part on the value of contributions made by you and the other students. You are expected to contribute as an active participant and an attentive listener. In addition to regular participation in discussions, each class will begin with a five-minute News Digest. We will discuss current news, media and new media trends, and issues of interest. Students will be able to sign up for a day to present a News Digest at the start of the term. **Participation in class is worth 20% of your final grade.**

Assignments: There are a total of **FIVE graded homework assignments, ONE group project** as well as in class exercises & impromptu presentations that count towards your final grade. A general description of the written assignments follows. Assignment instruction sheets containing more information will be distributed in class. Dates and topics may change slightly as we move through the semester. Any changes will be discussed in class beforehand.

ASSIGNMENT #1 (10 %): Media and Reporter Research. Select one media outlet and reporter to research and analyze.

ASSIGNMENT #2 (10 %): Message Strategy & Development. Develop a message strategy and key messages for a scenario to be provided using format provided with a 1-page rationale for your choices.

ASSIGNMENT #3 (10 %): Media List Development. Based on the message strategy and development work done in assignment #2, develop a media list of 10 contacts you would consider high priority targets for pitching your client’s message.

ASSIGNMENT #4 (10 %): PR Writing Practice. Each student will be assigned to write a 500 word press release based on a company and/or issue they are considering for the final group project.

ASSIGNMENT #5 (10 %) Crisis/Case Analysis. A case study with corresponding questions will be distributed in class, for completion on your own. The case will also be discussed in class.

GROUP PROJECT (30%). Developing a Media Relations Plan. Students will be divided into teams of 4 or 5 at the midpoint of the semester. Each group will choose a company with a problem, opportunity and/or initiative that requires media relations support. Teams will spend the last 6 weeks of the course collaborating to develop a media relations plan in support of that company initiative. Teams will also deliver a 10 to 12 minute presentation that explains their plan. A detailed project description outlining the requirements of this assignment will be provided in class and posted online.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ALL COURSE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE POSTED IN BLACKBOARD.

LATE WORK POLICY: Late assignments will be assessed a penalty of 10% grade reduction per calendar day late, unless otherwise agreed upon in writing with your professor. Homework extensions will only be granted in extreme cases resulting from excused, documented absences. Homework assignments will not be accepted after 7 days.

Grading Assignments are worth 80% and class participation is worth 20% of final grades in this course (100% total). The standard 100 point grading scale used is as follows:

A = 93 to 100%	A- = 92.99 to 90%	B+ = 89.99 to 88%	B = 87.99 to 83%
B- = 82.99 to 90%	C = 79.99 to 70%	F = 69.99 to 0%	

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://academicsupport.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://academicsupport.georgetown.edu>) 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.

MEDIA RELATIONS – FALL 2015 COURSE SCHEDULE
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CLASS: DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	WORK DUE
#1: Sept. 3 rd	Course Overview & Orientation ONLINE ONLY – PLEASE REVIEW THE MULTI-MEDIA FILE POSTED ONLINE (in Blackboard)	
#2: Sept 10 th	Lecture: Effective Messaging -Goals of messaging -Messaging mapping strategies -Good vs. bad messaging	Read Ch. 1 & 2
#3: Sept 17 th	Lecture: Working with Reporters -Developing media lists -Building relationships -Tools of the trade	Read Ch. 3 & 4
#4: Sept 24 th	Lecture: Media Outreach & Pitching	Assignment #1 due

- Overview of pitching techniques
- Targeting your pitches

#5: Oct 1st	Lecture: Media Training <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Conducting interviews-Identifying/preparing spokespeople-Getting your message across on air-Handling hostile audiences/reporters-Review and critique of media interviews	Read Ch. 5 Assignment #2 due
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#6: Oct 8th	Lecture: Writing for the Media <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Writing for the press-Writing for social media & the web	Assignment #3 due
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#7: Oct 15th	Lecture: Emerging/Social Media & Media Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Social media and journalism-Social media and public relations-Social media relations outreach strategies	Read Ch. 6
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#8: Oct 22nd	Lecture: Crisis Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Developing a crisis communication plan-Message preparation-Review of recent media crises	Assignment #4 due Read Ch. 9
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#9: Oct 29th	Lecture: Media Relations Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Structure/Components of a plan-Setting media relations objectives-Media relations tactics-Measuring success	Read Ch. 10 Assignment #5 Due
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Final Group Project: Communications Plan Discussion

The class will be divided into teams by this date, and requirements for the final project will be distributed and discussed in depth.

#10: Nov 5th	Lecture: Experiential PR & Media Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Press conferences-Live events and “publicity stunts”-Tours and demonstrations	Read Ch. 7
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-Conferences & trade shows

#11: Nov 12th

Lecture: Non-Profit Media Relations

- Media relations as primary strategy
- Messaging around issues
- Finding creative angles

#12: Nov 19th

In-Class Workshop: Team check-ins and peer review of group project progress.

Nov 25th

THANKSGIVING DAY – NO CLASSES – PLEASE EAT TURKEY

#13: Dec 3rd

Lecture: Navigating the Media Relations Career Landscape

- What employers are looking for
- Developing the right skill set
- Finding the jobs: agency vs. client-side

#14: Dec 17th

FINAL TEAM PROJECTS DUE / PRESENTATIONS IN CLASS

IMPORTANT SCHEDULE NOTES:

This schedule is subject to change. Please refer to Blackboard for the latest version of the syllabus; all course related announcements; and any required course related material.

One additional lecture will be scheduled during the fall term. Day, time and mode of instruction (online or in person) will be announced.

Additional reading and supplemental materials will be posted in Blackboard and/or distributed in class.