



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

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

Monday, 5:20 p.m. – 7:50 p.m. | Spring 2016

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Instructor: Jenna Golden

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

The digital media landscape moves at a rapid pace, and this course will provide students with a general knowledge of how to manage communications challenges in a tech-centric era. In this class we will examine the fundamentals of digital communications including blogs, mobile, social networks, community management, and online advertising. Students will learn how to apply relevant strategies and tactics to the business world, and to use an integrated approach when proposing solutions. We will examine both existing and emerging technologies, using trends and case studies to identify best practices. This class will encourage hands-on participation, and students will leave the course with an increased knowledge of practical applications for a successful digital strategy.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Students will learn how to navigate and understand the digital landscape including the many platforms and mediums that are available for communication.
- Develop thoughtful and integrated strategies to best integrate digital tactics into traditional communications plans.
- Understand the strengths and weaknesses of social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and Google, and how organizations are effectively using them to achieve their objectives.
- Develop familiarity with effective online tools and methods such as content development, online community building, engagement strategy, monitoring, measurement, mobile, video, and more.
- Develop a comprehensive digital communications strategy that addresses specific business challenges.

### **RECOMMENDED READING**

#### **Books**

- *Brand Media Strategy: Integrated Communications Planning in the Digital Era* by Antony Young (Palgrave Macmillan; Second Edition, August 26, 2014)  
ISBN: 978-1-137-27956-9  
\$23 on Amazon



## Websites/Blogs

I recommend that you are regularly perusing these sites in order to keep up with the latest in the digital sphere. These will be valuable resources in order to stay afloat of current events and deepen your knowledge of the course subject matter:

- Mashable (<http://mashable.com/>)
- TechCrunch (<http://techcrunch.com/>)
- AdAge (<http://adage.com/>)
- AdWeek (<http://www.adweek.com/>)
- BuzzFeed (<http://www.buzzfeed.com/>)
- The Verge (<http://www.theverge.com/>)

## Research

- Pew Research Center Social Media Update 2014:  
<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/01/09/social-media-update-2014/>

## ATTENDANCE

Attending class will be critical to your success. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. In the event that you must miss class, please notify me by email 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.

## OFFICE HOURS

Office hours are by appointment only. I will usually be available before and after class. I am also available to schedule phone appointments during non-business hours, if needed.

## CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. I plan to give you my full attention and I ask that you do the same. The use of mobile devices should be limited unless specifically related to the lessons or coursework. I understand you are working professionals and might need to address something urgent during class. If this is the case, I ask that you step outside and/or respond during a break. Class discussions should be considerate of others' views and opinions. I encourage active discussion, but please express them respectfully at all times.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Tumblr Trending Topics

Because the digital landscape is changing daily, I will ask each of you to start a Tumblr and



update it at least once per week around trending topics in the digital communications sphere. Each post should be at least a paragraph referencing a newsworthy happening, and providing some context and thought about the issue as it relates to digital communications. Please also include a link to the issue or article you are discussing in the post. Feel free to include visuals and supporting materials where necessary. Each week we will start the class by reviewing a recent trend or happening and many of these examples will be pulled from your Tumblr. Please be prepared to discuss. I ask that you **email me the link to your Tumblr by the beginning of the second class** so I can follow along throughout the course.

### **Social Media 2014 Analysis Paper**

In January of 2015 Pew Research Center unveiled new data related to the state of social media in 2014. The research includes the demographics of key social networking platforms, and the frequency of social media use. After reading through the study please write a 4-5 page paper outlining what your social strategy would entail from an organic and paid perspective for one of the following companies or organizations listed below. Please provide rationale for which channels you would use as well as those you would not, and how you would go about using them strategically and effectively.

- AARP: <http://www.aarp.org/> (membership organization)
- ONE Campaign: <http://www.one.org/us/> (cause driven organization)
- Chevron: <http://www.chevron.com/> (corporate brand)

Please email a copy of your paper to me by the start of class on the date that it is due with the subject line: [Last Name] MPPR 755 Analysis Paper [mm/dd/yy]

### **Final Project: Digital Assessment and Strategic Plan**

Throughout the semester, you will work on an individual project that will be due at the end of the course. Select an organization or company that means something to you. The project should include a full digital assessment which reviews all of their communications channels, and also includes an analysis of what you believe is working and what is not. Additionally, you will be expected to create a sound digital strategy for how they should approach their external digital communications. Please outline the following:

- Organization you are evaluating including their goals and mission.
- Current state of their digital presence including websites, blogs, social channels.
- Strategies and channels that you believe are working well, and why.
- Strategies and channels that you believe are not working well, and why.
- Recommendations for how they should approach digital communications, and how you would map out a revamp of their digital presence.
- A 12 month plan outlining the process for which you would unveil the new strategy, including a calendar of events.

Please include screenshots, links, and relevant digital components. Get creative; make it as



interactive as possible. At the end of the semester you will present an overview of your project to the class (15 minutes per person). This presentation must include slides and visuals.

## GRADING

- Attendance and Participation: 25 points (10%)
- Tumblr Trending Topics: 50 points (20%)
- Social Media Analysis Paper: 50 points (20%)
- Final Project: Digital Assessment and Strategic Plan: 125 points (50%)

**Total** **250 points**

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

A	100-94	B-	82-80
A-	93-90	C	79-70
B+	89-87	F	69-0
B	86-83		

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/>
- Academic Resource Center  
202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)  
<http://academicsupport.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](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); <http://academicsupport.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 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. I will do my best to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.



## CLASS SCHEDULE

### 1/13 **Week 1: Introduction**

Overview of course, class expectations, assignments. Understanding the foundation of digital communications and the ever-changing landscape.

- *Reading assignment for 1/25:* [An Inside View of Walmart's Digital Communications Strategy](#).
- *Assignment due for 1/25:* Please email me ([jigolden@gmail.com](mailto:jigolden@gmail.com)) by 1/24 your Tumblr link so I can track your progress throughout the semester.

### 1/25 **Week 2: Building a Digital Footprint**

How to build a successful online presence. How organizations can adapt to the world of digital.

### 2/1 **Week 3: Websites, Blogs, and Bloggers**

The necessary elements for a successful website. Overview of the evolution of blogging.

- *Reading assignment for 2/8:* [6 Content Marketing Trends to Watch in 2016](#).

### 2/8 **Week 4: Content Marketing and Building Communities**

How to create digital content that drives engagement and builds community participation.

- *Reading assignment for 2/22:* [Pew Research Center Social Media Update 2014](#)
- *Assignment due for 2/22:* Social Media Analysis Paper. Please email it to me ([jigolden@gmail.com](mailto:jigolden@gmail.com)) by the start of class on 2/22.

### 2/22 **Week 5: Social Media: Facebook, Google, and Twitter**

How social is changing the game from an organic and paid perspective.

- *Reading assignment for 2/29:* [How do American's use Twitter for News?](#) and [The Evolving Role of News on Twitter and Facebook](#)

### 2/29 **Week 6: Social Media Continued: Facebook, Google, and Twitter**

How social is changing the game from an organic and paid perspective.

### 3/14 **Week 7: Online Advertising**

The world of digital paid media: Display, SEO, social advertising, programmatic, etc. Check-in on final projects.

### 3/21 **Week 8: Mobile and Video**



The capabilities of mobile targeting and video creative. What these channels offer to brands.

**4/4 Week 9: Monitoring and Measurement**

Understanding digital analytics and how to track the conversation.

**4/11 Week 10: No Class**

Please use this time to work on your final project

**4/18 Week 11: Crowdsourcing**

What topics have resonated the most this semester? Which ones do we want to cover again with a deeper dive? We'll crowd source this within the class and double back during this session.

- *Reading assignment for 4/25: [These are the Digital Trends Everyone in Tech and Advertising Needs to Know.](#)*

**4/25 Week 12: The New Frontier**

What's next in the world of digital communications? Predictions for the road ahead.

- *Assignment due for 5/2: Final project.*

**5/2 Week 13: Final Project Presentations**

15 minute presentations for each student

**5/9 Week 14: Final Project Presentations**

15 minute presentations for each student