DMPPR-906-01: Activating Cause Audiences
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-Public Relations and Corporate Communications
Mondays, 8:00pm to 10:20pm | Spring 2016

Instructor: Evan C. Parker

COURSE OVERVIEW

Every cause is driven by its supporters — from donors, to advocates, to volunteers. We’ll use the latest in behavioral economics, program analytics and brain science to show how you can encourage your target audiences to support a cause and do good in the world.

This course will explore how people are “wired” to support causes, best practices from campaigns and tactics that leading causes (and progressive brands) use to drive support, and how a supporter’s generation (Millenials, Boomers, etc) impacts what they want from their causes and non-profits.

The course will help students understand how to be a successful part of a non-profit/social marketing, grassroots, advocacy or fundraising communications campaign, or how to take advantage of the “cause” model for acquisition and use it to further corporate business goals.

In the end, students will know how to craft (and evaluate) a pragmatic acquisition, conversion, engagement and retention strategy that goes beyond just informing and educating, but actually drives behavior.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Develop and execute supporter-focused communications strategies, with industry-leading best practices to motivate and activate supporters.
- Understand the motivations potential supporters have, and how to best use these motivations to move supporters “up the pyramid” to become better and more attentive, including how an understanding of the full lifecycle of a supporter can lead to better conversion strategies.
- Select the best target audience segments for a program, and tailor strategies based on how different cohorts (based on age, lifecycle, demographics, etc.) view their relationship with a non-profit.

ATTENDANCE

In-class discussion and practice are essential to mastering the content of this course. You 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-). Each class missed beyond the first three will result in an additional final grade reduction of one level.

REQUIRED READINGS/COURSE STRUCTURE

Given the nature of the subject matter, there is no single, comprehensive “textbook” that could be purchased for this class. Additionally, most potential primary source readings are too dense and complicated to be reasonably consumed week-to-week.

As a result, this class will have no required readings.

Lectures will synthesize from dozens (actually, hundreds) of books and publications, and will be thoroughly documented with notes pointing to source materials – allowing you to follow up on the materials of interest to you at a time of your choosing.

Twice during the semester, you will “adopt” a non-profit of your choosing, and the follow these non-profits through the semester. Your out-of-class time will focus on doing your own evaluations of organizations from raw communications materials.

This semester, you will focus on taking lessons learned from class lectures (and your own independent study) and applying them to real world situations for these adopted non-profits.

ASSIGNMENTS

The class will have three major assignments, as well as a series of smaller activities that will be evaluated as part of a class participation grade.

Class Participation Grade

In lieu of reading, most weeks you’ll be asked to execute a small assignment in preparation for class, from selecting a nonprofit to “adopt,” to reading their conversion materials, to analyzing their target audiences, etc. These ad-hoc assignments are designed exclusively to prepare you for your three primary graded assignments.

Class preparation assignments are not formal assignments. Often they are a first-draft outline to prepare you for one of the larger assignments, or they are informal notes designed to prepare a compelling argument for in-class discussion.

You’ll be asked to submit these ad-hoc assignments to the instructor before class begins, though they will not be graded in the traditional sense. The instructor will provide feedback on the provided notes, and will provide “participation” points (described below) that focus on your level of effort and ability to make a compelling argument more than the “correctness” of your conclusions.

There is a maximum of 45 participation points available from the 15 classes during this semester. The points will be given as such:
- By default, you will get 3 points each class for being present, prepared and participatory, which includes completing the ad-hoc assignment (if any).
- In special circumstances, you will get a 4th point for being exceptional in either your preparation (e.g. the ad-hoc assignment described above) or in-class participation.
- You will receive less than 3 points if you are did not adequately completed the ad-hoc assignment, submitted your assignment late, did not attend class, or were anti-social during the class session (i.e. smartphone use outside of breaks, use of laptop/tablet for reasons other than note-taking, or being dismissive of others’ views).

If you have to miss a class – even due to events outside of your control – you must let the instructor know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Please note that “making up” a missed class only impacts the class participation grade, and has no impact on any University-mandated penalties described in the “Attendance” section above.

**Case for Giving/Support Memo – Week 05**
You will provide a 700 to 1,000-word Case for Giving/Support for your chosen non-profit, with two parts:
- A memo describing your organization’s optimal approach to a case for giving/support.
- An email, letter or speech that executes your recommended approach as if it would be presented to an actual prospective supporter.

Specific requirements, including details for submitting the assignment, can be viewed on Blackboard.

**Organization Conversion Strategy – Week 10**
You will review a non-profit organization and its brand identity as defined through supporter communications in a 1,500 to 2,500-word memo. You will analyze (or recommend) the following elements of the organization’s conversion strategy, including:
- Your organization’s goals and objectives.
- The primary supporter audience segments needed to reach those goals, and the deep needs that drive those audiences.
- A narrative that best supports your organization’s goals and objectives.
- The offers you feel will best convert your audiences.

Specific requirements, including details for submitting the assignment, can be viewed on Blackboard.

**Final Non-profit Conversion Campaign Plan – Week 15**
The “capstone” project for the class will be the creation of a conversion plan for a non-profit. The instructor will split the class into small groups, and work with each group to select a non-profit organization. The teams will then create a conversion campaign plan, and “pitch” that plan to the class during the final class session.

The elements of the conversion campaign will include:
The final product will be a group 18 to 24 minute in-class presentation, a question and answer “defense” of the strategy to follow, and an accompanying PowerPoint document.

Specific requirements, including details for submitting the assignment, can be viewed on Blackboard.

WORK SUBMITTED

Quality assignments will review and include references and citations to a wide range of donor communications, including (but not limited to) website content, direct mail, email (especially welcome series and post-donation series), annual reports and brand videos.

All papers should be typed in a 12-point font, double-spaced. All papers should use a standard academic referencing format such as MLA or Chicago Style, but it does not matter which so long as the professor can intuitively understand your citations. Please include your name, the assignment title, and the date on the assignment, and please number your pages.

In addition, please note the following requirements for all works submitted:

Attribution

In professional fundraising and marketing circles, the ability to read source materials is nearly as important to a conversation as the conclusions presented in a paper or presentation. Proper attribution increases the credibility of a strategy; they do not detract from a full appreciation of your work. As a result, please endnote extensively so that others may learn from your research.

Plagiarism Checks

In full disclosure, the instructor uses a plagiarism checker as a matter of course, so please make sure you are fully comfortable that the work is unassailably yours before turning it in. Plagiarized work will receive an automatic failing grade for the assignment, and will be reported to the Honor Council in accordance to University policy.

Assignment Submission

To submit your assignments, upload them to the Blackboard course management system at http://campus.georgetown.edu/.

Late Submissions

All assignments are due at the beginning of class (8:00pm) on the due date specified in the schedule, unless otherwise noted. All late assignments, regardless of circumstances (e.g. circumstances within or outside of the your control) will receive a half letter grade reduction for each day they are late. (A
day is defined, as 0 to 24 hours past the date/time it was due.) For example, an assignment turned in 30 minutes late that would otherwise have earned an “A” would now receive an “A-“.

**Grading Criteria/Rubrics**

When each assignment is first discussed in class, the instructor will provide specific guidance on how to ensure your assignments are complete and comprehensive, including insight into the rubric used to grade that assignment.

Questions about grading criteria for specific assignments should be brought to the instructor’s attention at least one week before submission of assignments, so that all students may benefit from the conversation. All grades and grading criteria are the sole discretion of the instructor.

**GRADING**

The graded assignments are weighted as follows:

1. Class Participation (including ad-hoc preparation assignments) — 45 points.
2. Case for Giving/Support — 45 points.
4. Final Non-profit Conversion Plan — 120 points.

Total: 300 points.

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

A: 300 – 279
A-: 278.99 – 270
B+: 269.99 – 264
B: 263.99 – 249
B-: 248.99 – 240
C: 239.99 – 210
F: 209.99 – 0

The instructor will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

**COURSE POLICIES**

In respect to those around you:

- You are expected to act professionally, and to not be dismissive of others’ views.
● The use of laptops and tablets will be limited to what is required for note taking.
● Any kind of messaging or social media regardless of device (including smartphones, laptops or tablets) will be relegated to breaks.
● Please keep smartphones in your bags and on silent (please note that “vibrate” is not silent).
● You are welcome to bring food or drink to the classroom, but please be prepared to share.

Repeated violations of these polices will impact your grade, including (but not limited to) your class participation grade as described below in the “Assignments” section above.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES AND POLICIES
Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on the 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/

● 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; 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.*

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.

**Course Schedule**

The following is a course schedule, including class topics, assignment due dates, and planned guest speakers. The schedule (and the syllabus as a whole) may change to accommodate discussion of other topics based on opportunity, emerging events, student requests, or the schedules of guest speakers. The instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

Please note, we have to hold a make-up class, due to Presidents’ Day falling on a Monday. As a result, early in the semester, we’ll hold a vote (via a platform like “Doodle”) on which date between Tuesday, February 9th and Sunday, February 21st to hold the makeup the class. We’ll make every effort to accommodate all of our schedules, but will ultimately pick the most popular date. In case of a tie, we’ll give preference based on who said “yes” to more proposed times.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>In-class Activities</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<td><strong>Week 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
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<td>MLK Day</td>
<td>No class meeting, due to holiday.</td>
<td>Select a non-profit to “adopt” due no later than Tuesday, 18 Jan 2016 at 11:59pm.</td>
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| **WEEK 02**  
**Monday**  
**25 Jan 2016** | How do people make decisions?  
How do supporters choose which organization to support?  
Writing for conversion. | What “need” does your organization meet, and what real-world benefit does your organization provides. |
| **WEEK 03**  
**Monday**  
**01 Feb 2016** | Persuasion: the science behind influencing others.  
Performance-based organizations.  
Discuss: Case for Giving/Support assignment. | How can your organization use urgency, and what “benefit” does your supporter sees for their support. |
| **WEEK 04**  
**Monday**  
**08 Feb 2016** | Guest speaker (Robyn Castellani, Behavior Economist) on narratives and deep needs.  
Narratives for non-profits. | n/a. |
| **Presidents’ Day**  
**15 Feb 2016** | No class meeting, due to holiday. | Case for Giving assignment due on Tuesday, 16 Feb 2016 at 11:59pm. |
| **WEEK 05**  
**TBD**  
**Make Up Date** | Common non-profit audience segments.  
Generational impact on non-profit support.  
The changing (demographic) face of the United States. | n/a. |
| **WEEK 06**  
**Monday**  
**22 Feb 2016** | Conversion-first communications planning.  
Impact of empathy and values on non-profit supporters. | n/a. |
| Week 07 | Monday 29 Feb 2016 | How segment and sector impacts campaign strategy. 
Offers and call to actions. 
Discuss: Organization Conversion Strategy assignment. | What are the mission, goals, objectives and measures for your organization? What are the target audiences for your organization, their deep needs, and the strategies you’ll use to activate them? |
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<td>Spring Break 07 Mar 2016</td>
<td>No class meeting, due to holiday.</td>
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| Week 08 | Monday 14 Mar 2016 | The Supporter Lifecycle, and how organizations convert from element. 
Preview: Final Non-profit Conversion Campaign Plan assignment. | What are the best “offers” to provide to your audience to get them to convert, and the narratives you’ll use to support them. |
| Week 09 | Monday 21 Mar 2016 | Guest speakers (TBD) on organizational conversion planning. 
Research-driven campaign planning. | n/a. |
| Week 10 | Monday 04 Apr 2016 | How does an organization choose tactics? 
Evaluating program and tactic performance. 
Select Final Group Organization (in class). |
| **No class 28 Mar due to Easter holiday** | | |
| Week 11 | Monday 11 Apr 2016 | Acquisition and conversion tactics. 
|---------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 13 | Monday 25 Apr 2016 | Open salon with guests, including one-on-one strategy sessions for final presentations:  
- Sue Citro, Chief Digital Officer for Best Friends Animal Society.  
- Melissa Wyers, Executive Director for NGP/VAN’s EveryAction.  
- Begoña Vazquez-Santos, Director of International Fundraising for The Nature Conservancy. | Outline of Campaign Tactics element for final presentation due. |
| Week 14 | Monday 02 May 2016 | Special Guest: Christina Walker, interim Chief Development Officer for YWCA. Parking lot for questions raised by class during the semester. | n/a. |
| Week 15 | Monday 09 May 2016 | Final Non-profit Conversion Campaign Plan presentations. | Final Non-profit Conversion Campaign Plan assignment due. |