



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Public Relations and Corporate Communications

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-PRCC | FALL 2016

MPPR-505: Elements of Communications Planning

Wednesdays, 8:00-10:30 p.m.

Location: 640 Mass Ave Washington, DC 20001 | Room C219

Instructor: Meg Cohen

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Mastering communications planning is similar to laying the foundation for your dream home – it requires an investment but if completed with care, the other pieces easily fall in 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

REQUIRED READING

The resources for this course include articles, book excerpts, case studies, multimedia, RFPs and one text book. The readings are chosen to give you a solid foundation for understanding the Georgetown planning framework and opportunities to apply the model to real-world examples.

Wilson, L., & Ogden, J. (2014). *Strategic communications planning for effective public relations and marketing* (6th ed.). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt publishing company.
ISBN-13: 978-1465249159 or ISBN-10: 146524915X | \$85.00 (new)

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

Recommended Reading

Ries, A., & Trout, J. (2000). *Positioning: the battle for your mind*. New York, New York: McGraw-Hill publishing company. ISBN-13: 978-0071373586, ISBN-10: 0071373586 | \$20.00 (new)

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 the instructor 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 additional classes 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, etc. – you must let the instructor know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.

COURSE POLICIES

- A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off all cell phones or other communication devices while in class. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions. What happens in class stays in class unless you receive permission from the instructor to share something.
- 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 Canvas.
- 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 is too. 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.

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 one week before the assignment is due, I will review your specific question and discuss it with you. Feedback on all final assignments will be provided in a timely manner; no more than two weeks after the assignment was turned in.

Work must be submitted via Canvas by 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.

Weekly Readings and Class Discussion – 10% of final grade, 5 points per week (x 15)

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

Framework Application Presentations – 5% of final grade, 20 points

Each week, students will be asked to apply the previous week's lesson to a current event in the news, a recent campaign or personal experience. 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, 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 (Four quizzes) – 5% of final grade, 5 points each

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 (Four assignments) – 15% of final grade, 25 points each

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.

Peer Reviews – 5% of final grade, 20 points each

Twice during the course of the semester, you will submit your final plan draft for review by another student in the class. You will be graded on turning in a draft for feedback and providing helpful feedback to your student colleague. Note that you will be paired with a student who is *not* responding to the same client RFP as you.

Midterm Outline – 15% of final grade, 60 points

In preparation for the final plan, students will complete a 6-8 page communications plan outline through the messages section. You will develop the draft 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 bulleted statements to convey your insights, considerations and strategic thinking about your final plan. You will also submit at least 10 of your 25 references you will use in the final plan.

Final Plan and Pitch – 40% of final grade, 120 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.*

During the final class, you will present key highlights from your plan and showcase your ability to pitch your ideas in a compelling manner.

WORK SUBMITTED

Your assignments should meet Georgetown University's standard of excellence. Please follow these guidelines for all written assignments:

- Put student name, assignment title and date in the top left of the first page.
- Use a 12-point, plain font, 1" margins, and page numbering (for pages 2+).
- If necessary, reference your sources using APA style citations. If you do not reference your work, you run the risk of plagiarizing.
- Consider the tone and formality of the assignments. Avoid contractions, slang, fragments or jargon.
- Proofread your work carefully.

GRADING

Your course grade will consist of the following:

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| Class Discussion (5 points per week): | 10% of final grade |
| Framework Application Presentation (20 points): | 5% of final grade |
| Quizzes (Four at 5 points each): | 5% of final grade |
| Assignments (Four at 25 points each): | 15% of final grade |
| Peer Reviews (Two at 20 points each): | 5% of final grade |
| Midterm Outline (60 points): | 15% of final grade |
| Final Plan (110 points): | 40% of final grade |
| Final Plan Pitch (20 points): | 5% of final grade |
| Total: | 100% |

Letter Grades by Percentage:

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| A | 94 – 100% |
| A- | 90 – 93.9% |
| B+ | 87 – 89.9% |
| B | 84 – 86.9% |
| B- | 80 – 83.9% |
| C | 70 – 79.9% |
| F | 0 – 69.9 % |

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

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

LIBRARY RESOURCES

<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/researchcourseguides>

<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/prcc>

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/>
- 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 at (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 instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

| DATE/TOPIC | READING DUE | ASSIGNMENT DUE | IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Class 1: September 7 Course Overview & Introduction to Planning Elements</p> | | | <p><u>Discussion</u>: Class introductions, background survey, syllabus review and discussion about the value of planning in strategic Communications</p> |
| <p>Class 2: September 14 Research Methods</p> | <p>Wilson & Ogden pp. 45-60</p> | <p>Sign up for your Framework Application Presentation via Canvas</p> | <p><u>Discussion</u>: Methods for primary and secondary research and RFP options</p> |
| <p>Class 3: September 21 Research as a Planning Tool</p> | <p>Wilson & Ogden pp. 61-75, 91-109</p> <p>Canvas Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monahan: Do-it-yourself Lobotomy ● Segal: Perfect Brainstorm | <p><u>Assignment 1</u>: Research methods</p> <p><u>Benchmark</u>: Choose your RFP and begin your research</p> | <p><u>Student Presenters</u>: TBD</p> <p><u>Guest Speaker</u>: Jessica Vanderhoff, SCS Librarian (TBC)</p> <p><u>Quiz 1</u>: Research methods</p> <p><u>Discussion</u>: The big idea vs insight and considerations</p> |
| <p>Class 4: September 28 Goal, Objectives & Key Publics</p> <p>NOTE: This class will meet remotely</p> | <p>Wilson & Ogden pp. 77-89 and 111-122</p> | <p><u>Assignment 2</u>: Case study and insights</p> <p><u>Benchmark</u>: Begin drafting goal, objectives and key publics</p> <p>Due by Sunday, October 2 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern via Canvas:</p> <p><u>Quiz 2</u>: Insight/research as a planning tool</p> <p><u>Written analysis</u>: Strengths and</p> | <p><i>Students will meet for an online synchronous session and complete online activities in lieu of a class meeting.</i></p> <p>We will meet via Zoom** from 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. Eastern. We will discuss identifying sound goals and finding your target audiences.</p> <p>**Missing this synchronous session counts as an absence from class. The attendance policy as listed in the syllabus still applies for this class session.</p> |

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| | | weaknesses of Sample Bank of America plan: Goal, Objectives, and Key Publics sections | |
| Class 5: October 5 Key Publics & Practical Application | | <u>Assignment 3</u> : Outline background, goal and objectives | <u>Guest Speaker</u> : TBA <u>Student Presenters</u> : TBD <u>Discussion</u> : Key learnings and best practices from planning |
| Class 6: October 12 Introduction to Branding, Framing & Message Design | Wilson & Ogden pp. 123-127 Canvas Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kawasaki: Branding ● Kawasaki: Frame ● Hallahan: Seven Models of Framing <p>Note: <i>Positioning</i> (Recommended Reading) is most relevant to this course topic.</p> | <u>Benchmark</u> : Continue research on key publics | <u>Student Presenters</u> : TBD <u>Quiz 3</u> : Goal, objectives and key publics <u>Discussion</u> : Avoiding brand and message dissonance; how to create compelling messages |
| Class 7: October 19 Outline Review | Canvas Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Duncan: Principles ● Leet: Message Matters | Submit your Midterm Outline draft via Canvas for Peer Review | <u>Student Presenters</u> : TBD Discussion: Outline Review |
| Class 8: October 26 Strategies & Tactics | Wilson & Ogden pp. 128-150 Canvas Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scott: Baby Dinosaur | <u>Midterm Outline Due via Canvas</u> : See syllabus and grading rubric for details | <u>Discussion</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brainstorming and applying insight to strategies and tactics ● After the Outline: Creating a Final Plan |
| Class 9: November 2 | Wilson & Ogden pp. 169-190 | <u>Benchmark</u> : You should be working on strategies | <u>Student Presenters</u> : TBD |

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| Calendars & Budgeting | | and tactics | <u>Discussion:</u> Being on time and on budget |
| Class 10: November 9 Measurement & Evaluation | Wilson & Ogden pp. 191-201 | <u>Assignment 4:</u> Strategies and Tactics Draft | <u>Student Presenters:</u> TBD <u>Quiz 4:</u> Strategies and tactics <u>Discussion:</u> The importance of measurement and showing impact |
| Class 11: November 16 Creative Materials | | <u>Benchmark:</u> You should have a draft plan up to the Calendar and Budget sections completed | <u>Student Presenters:</u> TBD <u>Guest Speaker:</u> TBD <u>Discussion:</u> Bringing your plan to life with visuals and creative materials |
| Class 12: November 23 Writing the Plan & Executive Summaries | Canvas Reading: ● Kawasaki: Executive Summary | <u>Benchmark:</u> You should be working on measurement, evaluation, and bringing your plan to life with creative materials | <u>Discussion:</u> Best practices in writing and presentations |
| Class 13: November 30 Case Studies | | <u>Peer Review:</u> Submit Final Plan Draft via Canvas | <u>Discussion:</u> Reviewing real-life Communications plans |
| Class 14: December 7 Final Plan Workshop | | <u>Benchmark:</u> You should be polishing up your plan and making it client-ready | <i>We will schedule 10-minute slots during class time to discuss your final plan</i> |
| Class 15: December 14 Pitching the Plan | | <u>Final Plan Due:</u> See syllabus and grading rubric for details | <u>Discussion:</u> Lessons learned and thinking about Capstone |

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| | | <u>Final Plan Pitches</u> | |
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