

**Center for Social Impact, Georgetown University**  
**3101 Wilson Blvd., (Room 202B) Arlington, Va., (Metro: Orange Line-Clarendon)**

### **Media Relations & Messaging in a New Media World (MPPR 715-01)**

**Instructor:** Frank J. Walter      **Email:** [fwalterdc@gmail.com](mailto:fwalterdc@gmail.com)      **Twitter:** fjwAkron  
**Phone:** 202-271-7727 (up to 9 p.m.)      **Office Hours:** By appointment  
**Meeting:** Wednesdays, 7:45 p.m.-9:45 p.m.      **Term:** Fall 2009

**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 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 Goals:**

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
- Conduct media interviews with print, broadcast and online outlets
- Create a social media news release and a PR video for YouTube
- Sharpen your critical thinking and communication skills

**Instructor Profile:** Frank Walter serves as a senior vice president of Environics Communications, where he leads the sustainability and clean energy practice, and supports the technology and non-profit practice areas. He has more than 25 years of communications and marketing experience. He has worked for Fortune 500 companies, non-profits, cause-related organizations, and in politics. He has developed communications programs for renewable energy, technology and health care companies, national nonprofits and advocacy organizations and led communications for a gubernatorial campaign in Texas. He has generated media coverage for clients on such outlets as: CNN, CNBC, NBC Today Show, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, AP, CNET, Huffington Post and a range of social media outlets. He also teaches a class on environmental communications at Georgetown University.

**Teaching Philosophy:** This course combines case studies, guest speakers, group discussions, and student presentations for an interactive and informative learning environment. The homework assignments and in-class presentations are designed to help you better understand and apply the principles and practices of media relations and messaging. You are expected to be active and informed participants in class discussions. Since discussions will often include current events, you are expected to keep up with local, national, and international news.

**Attendance:** Attendance is necessary for success in this class. If you miss more than two classes, your final grade will drop a letter grade. Special circumstances should be discussed with me immediately to receive consideration. In the event you need to miss a class, please notify me by e-mail prior to the start of the class. It will be your responsibility to get the notes from another classmate. ***Please note class starts promptly at 7:50 p.m. and finishes no later than 9:50 p.m.***

**Work Submitted and Presented:** You are expected to submit work on time and of high quality. All typed text should be in 12-point font, 1.5-spaced, spell-checked and have one-inch margins. Please follow AP style guide for your written papers. Please include your name, the assignment title, and the date on all written submissions. If you are presenting to the class and using PowerPoint or other graphics, please make sure type is legible. Since your grade is determined from written assignments, class discussions, and individual presentations, you should consider all equally important. Please bring a hard copy of your assignment to class the night it is due. If you need to miss a class, the assignment is to be sent to me by email before the class begins. Late work is dropped one grade for each week it is late. If you have extenuating circumstances, please let me know in advance of the due date and I will try to accommodate you.

**Ethics Statement:** As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor Pledge, and indeed as good scholars and citizens, you are expected to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of this course. You are expected to be familiar with the letter and spirit of the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System and on the Honor Council website. As faculty, I too am obligated to uphold the Honor System and report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty. For more information, please visit <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/hc/index.html>

### **Academic Resource Center**

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center ([arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and University policies.

**Civility Statement:** Class discussions require active listening and participation by all of us. However, one voice at a time! Please be respectful of opinions that might differ from yours. Please provide thoughtful comments and don't just speak for the sake of speaking. Cell phones, iPods, computer games, and other distractions are not permitted during class. Use of laptop computers during class discussions are discouraged. There will be a 10-minute break each night, time permitting.

### **Georgetown University Honor Pledge**

In the pursuit of 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 responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

### **Required Books:**

Stewart, Sally  
Media Training 101: A Guide to Meeting the Press  
 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.  
 2004  
 ISBN 0-471-27155-1

Solis, Brian and Breakenridge, Deirdre  
Putting the Public Back in Public Relations  
 FT Press  
 2009  
 ISBN-0-13-715069-5

### **Other Research and Readings:**

<http://www.business.twitter.com> (Read Twitter 101)  
<http://www.badpitch.blogspot.com> (Review weekly)  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com> (Read daily or subscribe to paper)  
<http://linkedin.com> (Set up your profile, research groups of interest)

<http://www.twitter.com> (set-up your Twitter account, you will need it for class)

Sheehan, Michael. *Facing the Television Camera*. 1990. (To be provided.)

Summary of Rebecca Leet's *Message Matters* book prepared by Frank Walter (To be provided)

PRSA Member Statement of Professional Values and Ethics Pledge. ([www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org))

**Consume Frequently:** *Washington Post, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, Politico*; CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, NPR; Huffington Post, YouTube, Google News, the Daily Beast, Gawker

PR sites:

- [www.prweb.com](http://www.prweb.com), [www.marketwire.com](http://www.marketwire.com), [www.newsgeneration.com](http://www.newsgeneration.com)
- [www.mediabistro.com](http://www.mediabistro.com), [www.prnewswire.com](http://www.prnewswire.com), [www.cision.com](http://www.cision.com)

## Overview of Assignments/Projects

**Readings and Research:** The texts and assigned articles for this class are easy reads. Expect some additional reading assignments to be distributed once class begins. Please be sure to complete all assigned readings prior to class and come prepared to discuss the topics. You will be asked to conduct a number of research projects that will involve online research and analysis.

**Class Discussions/Participation:** 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.

**Guest Speakers:** We will host a number of guest speakers to provide you more in-depth perspectives on the topics covered during the 14-week term. These speakers have a great deal of expertise and should provide valuable counsel for all of us. A Q&A session is planned for each guest speaker.

**News Digest:** Each class will begin with a five-minute News Digest. We will discuss current news, media and new media trends, and issues of interest. For some classes, you will be assigned a topic for discussion during News Digest. Your participation in News Digest is part of your class discussion grade.

**Client Project:** In keeping with the mission of the Center for Social Impact Communications, our client for the final project is the national nonprofit organization, Youth Service America (<http://www.ysa.org>). You will work in teams to develop a strategic communications plan for their 2010 Global Youth Services Day. A representative of this organization will detail the project during the term.

**Assignments:** There are seven weekly assignments, plus the final project. Papers and presentations should not exceed length and time restrictions. A description of each follows:

**1) Media Research and Presentation**—You are to select a media outlet from a list I will provide during the first class. You will then conduct research to provide the following information in a written document not to exceed three pages and in an oral presentation to the class not to exceed two minutes:

- Media outlet overview (audience figures, frequency, history, publisher/media owner, target audience, headquarters);
- Key editorial sections or news programming;
- Recent coverage analysis (pick from either “health care” “climate change and the environment” or “U.S. economic conditions”) to determine hot topics within your coverage area;
- Extent of online presence

- PR placement opportunities for an advocacy organization in the topic area you picked

**2) Reporter Research and Presentation**—Select and research one reporter from the publication or media outlet you picked for assignment one. This reporter should also have a blog and/or a Twitter account. Provide the following information:

- Reporter profile (find what you can, such as how long the reporter has worked at the media outlet, previous reporting experiences, beats or columns);
- Review of recent articles/stories (what has the reporter been covering?);
- Review of blog posts or Tweets (how do these differ from the articles or stories?);
- Reporting analysis (use of quotes, facts and figures, outside experts, etc.);
- Contact information;
- Pitch tips: Based on what you learned, how would you pitch this reporter if you were doing PR for a company or organization he/she covers? How would you interact with the reporter on his/her blog or Twitter account?

Your paper should be no longer than three pages and presentation no longer than two minutes.

**3) Media Interview Checklist**—You will prepare your own media interview checklist drawing from readings, class discussions, guest speakers and one or more outside interviews with a journalist or PR professional. You are to create a list of at least seven do's and don'ts and a list of five "before the interview" reminders. This document should be no longer than two pages and should be in bullet point format. Please list your sources at the end of this document. You can use this checklist when preparing executives for media interviews.

**4. Messaging Assignment**—Working in a team of four pick an organization who has been active on the national health care debate. Assignment: Write a three page paper to: 1) Provide a summary of the organization's key messages 2) Detail who they are trying to reach 3) Analyze the effectiveness of their messaging, and 4) Develop seven questions and answers (as appendix to paper) as a pre-interview reference for a mock appearance of one of your team members on the Diane Rehm show, broadcast locally on WAMU-FM and in select markets nationally. Be sure to listen to some of her shows to get a sense of the interview format. During class, your team spokesperson will participate in a mock interview.

**5) Twitter Analysis and Engagement Project.** During the first week of class you are to set up a Twitter account to be used during the semester. You will select a company or organization to follow. Based on the industry of the company or the focus of the organization, you will attempt to identify reporters and influencers to follow that relate to your selection. You will spend the first three weeks building your follower list and tracking the topics and tactics for their Tweets. During weeks four through seven, you will begin Tweeting from your account on topics that would appeal to your followers. **For week 8**, you will prepare a four-page paper describing what you have observed and summarizing the content of your Tweets. Be sure to include discussion of the content of the reporters you have followed on Twitter. You will also provide to me your Twitter address so I can review your Tweets along with the paper. Include a section on "lessons learned." Be prepared to present your findings in four minutes or less.

**6) Advocacy Campaign Project.** You will work with one other classmate on this project (a team of two). Select an advocacy campaign from a nonprofit or government organization. Study how the campaign unfolded and its success. Answer the following questions:

- What was the name of the campaign?
- Who sponsored and funded the campaign?
- What was its goal?
- What was its key message?
- What communication tactics did it employ?
- What has been its success?
- Who have been its spokesperson(s) and how often were they quoted?
- How did this campaign employ new media strategies?

- What did you learn from researching this campaign?  
Keep your answers crisp. Four-page limit.

**7) Social Media News Release.** Research examples of social media releases and create one for a cause, company or organization of your choice. Your release should reflect best practices from your research as well as your own strategic and creative input based on the topic you select. List the examples you researched and website references.

**Final Project**—You will work in teams of four or five students (depending on class size) to develop a communications plan for **Youth Service America** [www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org) and their 2010 Global Youth Services Day. As a suggested outline, your plan should include the following sections:

- Executive Summary
- Objectives
- Target Audiences
- Relevant Research
- Key Messages
- Communication Recommendations
  - Strategies
  - Tactics (to include a YouTube video used to promote the event to a target audience or a media outlet, not to exceed 90 seconds. Can be recorded with Flip Camera, mobile phone camera or other similar device).
- Timeline
- Required Resources
- Success Metrics

Your paper can be up to 12 pages. You will be asked to present your recommendations to the client on the last day of class with a time limit not to exceed 15 minutes. You will be given 5 minutes of set-up time between presentations. Please adhere to these time limits.

Summary of Grading	Grading Scale	
Total points: 1,000	A	940-1000
Assignments 1, 2 and 3—50 points each	A-	900-939
Assignments 4, 5, 6 and 7—100 points each	B+	880-899
Class Discussion—150 points	B	840-879
Final Project—300 points	B-	800-839
	C	700-799
	F	699 and below

#### About the Grading:

Written Assignments—Grades for written assignments are based on the following criteria:

- Completeness—Is the assignment completed correctly?
- Quality—Are ideas and research information communicated effectively?
- Creativity—Does the assignment demonstrate creative and strategic thinking?
- Comprehensiveness—Are multiple options, solutions, or ideas considered?

Oral Presentations—On projects that involve a written and oral presentation, grading is split 50 percent on the paper and 50 percent on the presentation. Grading criteria for oral presentations:

- Quality—Did the presentation convey the key points of this assignment?
- Clarity—Was the information presented clearly and effectively?
- Time—Was the presentation delivered in the time allotted?

Class Discussion—Grading criteria for class discussion:

- Quality contributions, *i.e.*, thoughtful comments or questions that related to the discussion.
- Willingness to participate in discussion.

- Ability to listen and respond with appropriate comments or questions.
- Respect and attentiveness shown to instructors, speakers and classmates.

### Course Summary at a Glance

Week	Discussion Topics	Assignments Due that Day
1. Wednesday, September 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions/Learning Expectations</li> <li>• Media IQ Test/What Makes News? Media Research Assignment Overview</li> </ul>	
2. Wednesday, September 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media Analysis Presentations</li> <li>• Media Trends/News Segmentation/Reporter Research &amp; Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stewart: Chapters 1, 2, 3,4</li> <li>• <b>Assignment 1—Media Research</b></li> </ul>
3. Wednesday, September 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporter Research Presentations</li> <li>• Working with Reporters 101</li> <li>• Building Relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solis: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5</li> <li>• Twitter 101</li> <li>• <b>Assignment 2—Reporter Research</b></li> </ul>
4. Wednesday, September 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guest Speaker: Bennett Roth, Reporter, Congressional Quarterly/Former Houston Chronicle Correspondent</b></li> <li>• Media Pitching Discussion and Workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stewart: Chapters 5, 6, 7, 10, 11</li> <li>• Reading: PRSA Member Statement</li> </ul>
5. Wednesday, October 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messaging 101 and Workshop</li> <li>• Messaging Group Project Assignment Overview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stewart: Chapters 8, 9</li> <li>• Solis: Chapter 6</li> <li>• <u>Message Matters</u> Handout</li> </ul>
5. Wednesday, October 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guest Speaker: Susan Matthews Apgood, President, News Generation: Working with Radio</b></li> <li>• Role of Spokesperson/Interview Scenarios/Staying on Message</li> <li>• Practice Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assignment 3—Media Interview Checklist</b></li> <li>• Stewart: Chapters 12, 13, 14, 15</li> <li>• Reading: Sheehan</li> </ul>
7. Wednesday, October 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guest Speaker: Steve Culbertson, CEO, Youth Service America</b> (client for final project)</li> <li>• Messaging Group Project Role Play &amp; Interviews</li> <li>• Mid-term Student Review Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Youth Services America and Global Youth Services Day</li> <li>• <b>Assignment 4: Messaging Group Project</b></li> </ul>
8. Wednesday, October 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guest Speaker: Gayle Weiserwasser, Vice President, New Media, TMG Strategies</b></li> <li>• New Media Strategies &amp; Tactics</li> <li>• Twitter Presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solis: Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10</li> <li>• <b>Assignment 5—Twitter Project</b></li> </ul>
9. Wednesday, November 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating Communication Plans</li> <li>• Communication Strategies &amp; Tactics Discussion</li> <li>• Events/Promotions/Surveys</li> <li>• Social Media Tactics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handout: Communication Plan Outline (Walter)</li> <li>• Handout: Tactics Toolbox (Walter)</li> </ul>
10. Wednesday,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guest Speaker: Leslie Aun,</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research how Obama</li> </ul>

November 11	<b>Vice President, Public Relations, World Wildlife Fund</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy Campaign Basics</li> <li>• Political Campaigns 101</li> </ul>	campaign used new media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research how environmental groups are promoting their advocacy agenda on climate change</li> </ul>
11. Wednesday, November 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy Campaign Presentations</li> <li>• Social Networks/PR 2.0 Discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solis, Chapters 11-17 and 19</li> <li>• <b>Assignment 6—Advocacy Campaign Project</b></li> </ul>
12. Wednesday, November 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Media Release Presentations</li> <li>• Traditional Media and New Media Evaluation and Measurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solis: Chapter 18</li> <li>• <b>Assignment 7: Social Media News Release</b></li> </ul>
13. Wednesday, December 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Guest Speaker: TBA</b></li> <li>• Work on Final Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on Final Project</li> </ul>
14. Wednesday, December 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Evaluation</li> <li>• Final Project Presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans for the Holidays!</li> </ul>

#### **Finding a Job:**

- 1) Network with family, friends, classmates, professional contacts
- 2) Identify target employers and develop creative and tailored pitch letter or make personal contact
- 3) Use networking tools such as Linked-in, Facebook and Twitter to research and contact potential employers or locate friends who can help make introductions for you
- 4) Join professional organizations such as PRSA, Women in Communications, IABC, American Marketing Association
- 5) Check job postings on [www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com), [www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org), [www.capitalcommunicator.com](http://www.capitalcommunicator.com), [www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org)
- 6) Build professional experience through internships, project work and even volunteer PR work assignments
- 7) Be persistent, aggressive and creative!

8/2/09