

**MESSAGING AND MEDIA RELATIONS
MPPR-715-01
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY**

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Office Hours: By Appointment
Class: Wednesdays, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Term: Spring 2010

Course Description

This course is designed to help you understand how to develop effective messaging and media relations campaigns. Throughout the course we will delve into real-life examples and you will create strategic messaging platforms, media materials, and communications plans. The in-class component will feature discussion, exercises, case studies, and several accomplished guest lecturers pertinent to the topics discussed in class. At the end of the class you will be able to:

- Create effective messaging
- Develop impactful media relations tools such as press releases, media alerts, and pitch letters
- Understand media training techniques
- Understand the different types of media, including social media
- Develop communications plans and implement strategic media relations campaigns

Class Philosophy

Because discussion is essential to the learning process, it will be a focal point of the class. We will discuss messaging and media relations issues, concepts, and strategies regularly. Students are expected to have read assignments before class and be ready to discuss the various texts and articles. Of course, to effectively target the media, you must be up to speed with current events. Accordingly, it is expected that you will have a solid and up-to-date understanding of national and international news. There will be periodic current events quizzes.

Attendance

The class will move quickly, so class attendance is very important. If you need to miss any classes, please notify me by email in advance. If you miss more than 2 classes your grade will drop one letter grade.

Submitted Work

In addition to regular reading assignments, there will be six homework assignments. Assignments should be typed in 12 pt font, 1.5 spaced, and handed in on time. Please bring a hardcopy of the assignment to class the evening it is due and submit an electronic version prior to class. Since this is a communications class, grammar is very important, so make sure to read through your assignments carefully. On written submissions please include your name, the assignment, class and date. If you need to miss a class, send the assignment to me by email prior to the start of the class. Late work will be dropped one grade. If there are extenuating circumstances please let me know in advance of the due date via email.

Guest Speakers

Several of our sessions will feature guest speakers. Following their presentations, you will have the opportunity to ask questions. Speakers confirmed thus far include Kate Emanuel, Senior Vice President, The Ad Council; Alex Field and Paul Selker, Digital Media Specialists, Burness Communications; Barbara Silberstein, USAID communications specialist (Sudan); and Del Galloway, Vice President, Public Relations, United Way.

Ethics Statement

As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor pledge, 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 am also 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) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavy Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Required Book:

Fitch, Brad

Media Relations Handbook for Agencies, Associations, Non-Profits and Congress

The Capitol.Net Inc

2004

ISBN 1-58733-003-2

Articles:

Articles will be distributed for reading periodically throughout the term.

Other Recommended Reading

Class members are expected to read at least one daily newspaper per day (e.g., *The Washington Post*, *the New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*) and keep informed of national and international news from other sources (such as the Internet, weekly news magazines, radio, and television).

Overview of Readings/Assignments/Projects:

Readings: Readings will be from the textbook as well as articles assigned periodically. For details please see the Class Schedule.

Assignments: There are 6 homework assignments, each worth 100 points. Papers and presentations should not exceed length and time restrictions.

- **Assignment #1** – Imagine you have received some funding to launch your own small business. What business would you launch? Write a one to two page press release about that business and a one page media advisory about your launch event. Choose two reporters and traditional

media outlets that you would pitch your story to and state why you chose each. Also choose two bloggers you would approach and explain why.

- **Assignment #2** – Remember the company you launched? What are its key value propositions? Develop a messaging document (no more than two pages) with four key messages about the company and at least three proof points for each message.
- **Assignment #3** – In class, you will be given the name of a client and interview situation. As your assignment you will be responsible for developing an internal Q&A for your client, intended to help them prepare for the interview. Write five probable interview questions and short answers for each. Include two difficult questions and bridge back to a key message. The Q&A should be one to two pages in length.
- **Assignment #4** – Select a non-profit organization and provide an overview: its overall goals and mission, its primary campaigns, and a summary of recent media coverage. Based on that research, determine a story to pitch the media regarding the organization, and select two traditional reporters/media outlets and two bloggers to approach regarding your story. Include a paragraph for each reporter/blogger, providing rationale for your choices. Three page limit. Be prepared to discuss in class.
- **Assignment #5** – Identify a company, organization, or politician that has faced a public crisis situation. Describe the crisis and their response. Did the company, organization, or politician handle the crisis effectively? Why or why not? If you had been heading their communications team, how would you have responded differently? Three page limit.
- **Assignment #6** – You will prepare a media plan for a small company or non-profit organization of your choice. The plan should include objectives, audiences, and three tactics that will achieve the overall objectives. The plan should be no longer than four pages. Be prepared to present the plan in class.

Final Project: In small groups, you will create a messaging and media plan for a client. You will include a situation analysis, objectives, audiences, launch tactics, and a timeline. You will also include three key messages and proof points. The plan should be 8-12 pages. Your team will have approximately 15 minutes to present the project on the final day of class. In addition to being graded as a group, you will each provide a grade for your team members, which will be taken into consideration as part of the final exam grades.

Grading:

This class will be based on a 1,000 point grading scale. Following is a breakdown of points:

Assignments: 600 points total

Class Discussion: 100 points

Current Events Quizzes: 50 points

Final Project: 250 points

Grade	Score
A	940-1000
A-	900-939
B+	880-899
B	840-879
B-	800-839
C	700-799
F	699 and below

Class Schedule

Following is a summary of the course and what to expect from each class. Please note that there may be changes to this based on various factors, and the changes will be discussed in class in advance.

Please be sure to bring your laptop to each class as they may be needed for in-class assignments.

Class	Focus	Assignments due that day
Wednesday, January 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction* <p>*Messaging and Media Relations Professor David Park will be on a business trip on January 20. Pallavi Kumar, a Georgetown SCS graduate and professor of communications at American University, will lead this class.</p>	
Wednesday, January 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion: Communications and Common Sense • Guest Speaker: Kate Emanuel, Senior Vice President, The Ad Council 	
Wednesday, February 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion: Tools of the Trade • Guest Speaker: Alex Field and Paul Selker, Digital Media Specialists, Burness Communications • Overview of Assignment #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitch: Chapters 1, 2
Wednesday, February 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion: Strategic and Campaign Messaging • Guest speaker: Barbara Silberstein, USAID Sudan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #1 due • Fitch, Chapter 3
Wednesday, February 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion: Messaging Case Study • Guest speaker: Del Galloway, Vice President, Public Relations, United Way • Overview of Assignment #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article from 2/10 class

Wednesday, February 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Discussion: Interacting with Reporters; Overview of the Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #2 due • Fitch: Chapters 4, 5
Wednesday, March 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion: Preparing for Interviews • Overview of Assignment #3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fitch, Chapters 7, 8
Wednesday, March 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class activity: Interview simulation • Overview of Assignment #4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #3 due
Wednesday, March 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #4 presentations • Class discussion: Crisis Communications and Ethics of PR • Guest Speaker TBD • Overview of Assignment #5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #4 due • Fitch, Chapters 12, 13
Wednesday, March 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion: Measuring PR • Guest Speaker TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #5 due
Wednesday, April 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class discussion: Elements of Communications Plans • Overview of Assignment #6 and final presentations 	
Wednesday, April 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #6 presentations • Final project preparation • Guest Speaker TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment #6 due
Wednesday, April 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final project preparation 	
Wednesday, April 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final presentations 	