COURSE OVERVIEW

The capacity of modern corporations to develop and communicate integrated messaging strategies is essential in a world of non-stop information and split-second decisionmaking. Corporations can no longer constrain themselves to market factors, but have become essential social and political actors on the world stage. Executives must possess sophisticated understanding and skill to manage “nonmarket” arenas to inform, motivate, and persuade various clients, markets, and constituencies within the global public sphere and social/political networks.

Strategic communication positions firms to a competitive advantage in business/industrial sectors, in capital markets, and legislative and governmental regulatory environments. As such, corporate communication has many different uses and roles, whether it is a tool of organizational management (to inform, engage, listen, and lead individuals within an organization); to attract clients; to encourage investors, or to influence legislative or regulatory environments. The old saying “Knowledge is Power” is only half right; Knowledge is useless if it is not deployed and communicated clearly and effectively.

This class will survey different arenas and practices of corporate communication—not only in the world of business, but also the effect on all of global society—to motivate, persuade and inform its various constituencies (i.e., investors, employees, governments, consumers, and clients). The course encompasses basic precepts of public affairs, investor relations, community engagement, and governmental relations to integrate the insights of practicing corporate communication professionals with the concepts and academic approaches of communication theory. Ultimately, students will have a broad understanding of the different roles and functions involved in strategic corporate communications within contemporary global society.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Media Writing Project (25 percent of class grade)

Students will participate in a media writing exercise that will provide students the practical experience of visualizing, framing, and writing a public communications product (i.e., press release, speech, marketing materials, etc.). Projects will be no longer than 3-4 pages, 1.5-spaced, 11-point Times New Roman.

Strategic Planning Project (25 percent of class grade)

Students will undertake a critical analysis of a unique strategic issue or objective discussed in class. The Strategic Communication Planning Project will be a 10-12 page (1.5 spaced, 10 point, Times New Roman) paper that provides an opportunity to address some of the unique strategic issues and objectives discussed in class. The goal is to develop the appropriate format and criteria for successful strategic communication. Each student will research the goals and/or needs of a particular corporation or industry of his/her choice and then propose an integrated communications and/or legislative strategy to achieve those goals/needs. Students are cautioned to focus on a scenario that provides for succinct, but detailed, analysis. The project itself should show original thinking—along with appropriate research and examples—to develop appropriate communication strategies, identify potential partners, develop key messages, anticipate stakeholder reaction, and consider methods for outcomes evaluation.

Students will be required to submit a prospectus that provides a concise overview of the topic, describes the corporation’s/industry’s unique circumstances, and the main frameworks to address the issues involved. During class students will lead 5-8 minute individual discussions about the Student Project Final in anticipation of your presentations and final project.
COURSE TEXTS/READINGS

This course will not rely upon a pre-determined text, but will use a combination of academic articles, book chapters, and professional materials that are accessible to all students. The materials will be distributed through Canvas and via email throughout the classes. If students are having trouble accessing the materials, please notify me.

CLASS DISCUSSION

A big part of this class will involve classroom discussion. As such, I will be employing the McCombs School rules about not using laptops or personal electronic devices in class. I am generally not in favor of having to invoke the policy, but find that it does encourage students to remain involved in the discussion.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

Introduction and Overview of Course

Strategic Communications Imperative
Readings:

Corporate Communications/Structures and History
Readings:

Organizational Imperatives and Objectives
Readings:

Theories of Strategic Communication
Readings:

Corporate Identity, Image, and Branding
Readings:

Social Media and Networking
Readings:
Corporate Social Responsibility

Readings:

Corporate Social Responsibility, Encyclopedia for Business (2nd ed.) 2014

Messages and Messaging Strategies /Persuasion, Influence, and Argument
We will discuss the process of persuasive writing, in anticipation of your writing a press release, speech, or marketing piece (3-4 pages) that will simulate a new product roll-out, a change in corporate strategy, or new programmatic initiative, etc. You will want to write on a topic on which you are moderately well versed, since you will be judged on how well you understand/communicate the issues involved.

Readings:

Ethical Issues
Readings:


Audiences / Stakeholder Relations
Readings:

News Media Relations
Readings:

Media Relations/ Crisis Management
Readings:
www.instituteforpr.org/topics/crisis-management-and-communications/

Human Resources/Employee Relations Communication
Readings:
Berger, Bruce K, Employee/Organizational Communications, Institute of Public Relations, 2008
http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/employee-organizational-communications/
Wall Street/Investor Relations

Readings:

Public Sphere/Issues Management

Readings:

Dougal, Elizabeth, “Issues Management,” *Institute for Public Relations, December 12, 2008*  
http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/issues-management/

Public Sphere/Issues Management/Case Studies

Case Studies:
Four case studies will be distributed before class to that look at issues management. Students will be assigned to analyze the studies and lead a thoughtful discussion of the circumstances and responses in each.

Governmental Relations

Readings:
https://www.academia.edu/2410950/The_Business_Of_America_is_Lobbying_Explaining_the_Growth_of_Corporate_Political_Activity_in_Washington_DC

Political Activity and Influence

Readings: