

**BGS 380 STRATEGIC CORPORATE COMMUNICATION**  
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## **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:*

Argenti, Paul A., Robert Howell, and Karen A. Beck, *The Strategic Communications Imperative*, MIT Sloan Management Review, [https://www.dartmouth.edu/~opa/communicators/fall08/reading/Sloan\\_MIT\\_Strat\\_Comm\\_Imp.pdf](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~opa/communicators/fall08/reading/Sloan_MIT_Strat_Comm_Imp.pdf)

#### **Corporate Communications/Structures and History**

*Readings:*

Cornelissen, Joep, "Chapter 1 and 2, Defining Corporate Communication," in *Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, (Los Angeles: Sage Publishing) 2008.

#### **Organizational Imperatives and Objectives**

*Readings:*

Smith, Ronald, "Analyzing the Organization," *Strategic Planning for Public Relations*, Routledge Press, 2012

#### **Theories of Strategic Communication**

*Readings:*

Straubhaar, Joseph, and LaRose, Robert, *Media Now: Communications Media in the Information Age* (3rd Edition), (Connecticut: Wadsworth Publishing) 2010, pp. 324-68.

#### **Corporate Identity, Image, and Branding**

*Readings:*

Balmer, John M.T. and Stephen A. Greyser, "Corporate marketing: Integrating Corporate Identity, Corporate Branding, Corporate Communications, Corporate Image and Corporate Reputation," *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 No. 7/8, 2006

#### **Social Media and Networking**

*Readings:*

Ang, Lawrence, "Community Relationship Management and Social Media," *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management* (2011) v. 18, pp. 31-38.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

### *Readings:*

Chandler, David, and William Wether, Jr., "Chapter One: What is CSR?" in *Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2014, pp. 3-36

Corporate Social Responsibility, *Encyclopedia for Business* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) 2014

<http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Comp-De/Corporate-Social-Responsibility.html>

## **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:*

"How to Write a Press Release," *Wiki-How*,

<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Press-Release>

## **Ethical Issues**

### *Readings:*

Bowen, Shannon A., "Ethics and Public Relations," *Institute for Public Relations*, October 30, 2007

Shum, Paul K., and Sharon L. Yam, "Ethics and Law: Guiding the Invisible Hand to Correct Corporate Social Responsibility Externalities," *Journal of Business Ethics* (2011) 98:549–571

## **Audiences / Stakeholder Relations**

### *Readings:*

Smith, Ronald, "Analyzing Publics," *Strategic Planning for Public Relations*, Routledge Press, 2012

## **News Media Relations**

### *Readings:*

Baron, David, "Chapter Three: The News Media and Nonmarket Issues," *Business and Its Environments*, Seventh Edition, (New York, NY: Pearson Education International), 52-69

## **Media Relations/ Crisis Management**

### *Readings:*

Coombs, W. Timothy, *Crisis Management and Communications*, Institute for Public Relations, 2007

[www.instituteforpr.org/topics/crisis-management-and-communications/](http://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:*

Laskin, Alexander V., (2011) "How Investor Relations Contributes to the Corporate Bottom Line," *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 23:3, pp. 302-324.

## **Public Sphere/Issues Management**

### *Readings:*

Baron, David, "Public Politics and Nonmarket Strategy, Chapter Six: Nonmarket Analysis for Business and Chapter Seven: Nonmarket Strategies for Government Arenas," *Business and Its Environments*, (New York, NY: Pearson Education International), 1996

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:*

Drutman, Lee, (2014) "The Business of America is Lobbying: Explaining the Growth of Corporate Political Activity in Washington, D.C." *Academia.edu*  
[https://www.academia.edu/2410950/The\\_Business\\_Of\\_America\\_is\\_Lobbying\\_Explaining\\_the\\_Growth\\_of\\_Corporate\\_Political\\_Activity\\_in\\_Washington\\_DC](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:*

Lux, Sean, T. Russell Crook, and David J. Woehr, "Mixing Business With Politics: A Meta-Analysis of the Antecedents and Outcomes of Corporate Political Activity," *Journal of Management* Vol. 37 No. 1, January 2011 pp. 223-247