

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations

Fall 2017

August 28, 2017 – December 11, 2017

Crisis and Issues Management

PSPR 6230

3 Credits

Monday/7:10 p.m. – 9:40 p.m.

Alexandria Graduate Education Center

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

Mark Meissner is a public relations executive for the PCI Security Standards Council, a global organization, that maintains, evolves and promotes Payment Card Industry standards for the safety of cardholder data across the globe. Prior to PCI, Mark was a crisis and litigation communications advisor to Fortune 100 and emerging industry leaders in the cybersecurity, health and life sciences, energy, transportation, media, real estate and financial services industries. He has in-depth experience in corporate, coalition, association and nonprofit communications and ally development. Mr. Meissner regularly works with corporate leadership teams to develop communications and prepare for high-profile media interviews.

Mr. Meissner has worked with organizational leadership to win in the court of public opinion, bringing data and science to bear and ensuring messaging is clear and resonates with stakeholders. Over his career, he has helped navigate through early- and late-phase crisis situations and mobilized powerful allies to strengthen clients' reputations in their marketplaces. His work in crisis communications includes programs designed to meet regulatory and legal objectives during major data security breaches, accidents, leaks and government investigations. With reputations on the line, Mr. Meissner has prepared newsmakers for high-pressure interviews with The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, CNN, USA Today, The Washington Post and 60 Minutes.

Mr. Meissner's professional background is in electoral and congressional politics. He served as campaign manager for former U.S. Rep. Tim Roemer (D-IN) and served as a Senate staffer for former U.S. Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN). Mr. Meissner was a candidate for U.S. Congress himself in 2002, finishing second in a field of five candidates vying for the Democratic nomination in Indiana's Second Congressional District. His campaign was hailed by local media as "relentless" and "impressive". He is an adjunct professor at The George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM) and serves as a guest speaker on running for local office with The George Washington University Center for Second Service.

Contact Information

Phone Number: (202) 744-8557

Email Address: markmeissner1@gmail.com

Communication

Email or text is the best way to reach me. I am available throughout the semester for scheduled calls and office hours by request. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me for questions and guidance.

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester. Students can access the course site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

Academic Integrity

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

Support for Students with Disabilities

GW’s Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Please notify your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class

If we experience some an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave here, we will meet at **Carlyle Square** in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University’s operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance and participation is imperative to your success in this class. As crisis work focuses on high-speed decision-making, your participation in class is invaluable to your coursework and learning. While attendance will not be kept, class participation will be a significant part of your final grade. If you must miss class, please make prior arrangements with me.

Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation

Over the course of the semester, students will spend at least 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for class.

Course Evaluation

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW's online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting any/all of the following:

Professor Lawrence Parnell
Director, Strategic Public Relations Program
lparnell@gwu.edu | 703-29- 4150

Dr. Jack Prostko
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development
College of Professional Studies
jackp@gwu.edu | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

THE COURSE

Strategic Public Relations Program Objectives

Upon the completion of the Masters in SPR, students will have obtained an enhanced understanding and skills in:

1. Fundamentals of effective, strategic communications;
2. Best practices for writing, media relations and strategic communications planning and implementation;
3. The fundamentals of tactical execution of a strategic communications plan;
4. Working with management and staff/vendors to develop and manage the implementation of effective communications strategies.

Course Description and Overview

The practice of Issues Management involves the intersection of a number of communications and policy disciplines, including environmental scanning, public policy analysis, public policy advocacy, strategic communications, media relations, grassroots mobilization, coalition management and corporate reputation management. This course will explore all the approaches in detail and examine ways in which they work together to further the broad strategic goals of organizations.

The goal of the course is to provide students with an in-depth knowledge of the various elements of Issues Management and to equip them with the practical skills needed to shape public opinion and public policy in order to advance organizational goals.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Understand the procedures and techniques involved in the issues management process, including the dynamics of a strategic response.
2. Understand the crisis and issues management life cycle. Be able to assess the scale and trajectory of a crisis situation and offer public relations-related counsel.
3. Develop the ability to conduct traditional and social media scans to sense and identify potential issues, and develop plans to navigate challenging public relations environments.
4. Learn to think strategically when confronted by limited information and time constraints related to crisis situations.
5. Develop a crisis/issue communications plan.

Course Requirements

Students are strongly encouraged to attend and participate in class. Participation in group work and class discussions is imperative to understanding the crisis and issues management framework. Students will be asked to participate in group assignments as well as work independently on a comprehensive strategic communications plan on behalf of a client of your choosing. Be prepared to invest significant time and effort in the development of your communications plan.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Issue Identification Identify your crisis/high stakes issue and	1, 2, 3, 4	9/15	5%

illustrate in one page why and for whom it is a crisis/issue.			
Client Selection - What client in the crisis/high stakes situation will you work for throughout the semester? In one page identify the client, provide background information on the individual or organization and illustrate why this client should care about the issue at hand.	1, 2, 3, 4	9/22	10%
Crisis/Issue Case Study Prepare a report that fully articulates the sensitivities and issues related to your selected issue and client. Identify the stakeholders internal and external, provide historical context on the issue as it relates to the public and the client.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	10/20-27	15%
Crisis/High Stakes Plan			50%
Class Participation	Class simulations and participation in discussions.		20%
Total			100%

Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

Grade*	Grading Standard
A 94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.
A- 90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+ 87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B 83-86	Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a "B" is viewed as unacceptable.
B- 80-82	You've completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+ 77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.

C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C-	70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F	Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

Required Text and Learning Materials

Media Relations Handbook, Fitch and Holtz

ISBN: 978-0393310351978-1-58733-167-1

https://www.amazon.com/Relations-Government-Associations-Nonprofits-Officials/dp/1587331675/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1503248013&sr=8-1&keywords=Media+Relations+Handbook

The Four Stages of Highly Effective Crisis Management, Jordan-Meier

ISBN: 978-1-4398

https://www.amazon.com/Stages-Highly-Effective-Crisis-Management/dp/1439853738/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1503248573&sr=8-1&keywords=Four+Stages+of+Highly+Effective+Crisis+Management

Social Media and Crisis Communications, Austin & Jin

ISBN: 978-1-138-81199-7

https://www.amazon.com/Social-Crisis-Communication-Lucinda-Austin/dp/1138812005/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1503248628&sr=8-1&keywords=Social+Media+and+Crisis+Communications

Harvard Business Review on Crisis Management

ISBN: 978-1578512355

https://www.amazon.com/Harvard-Business-Review-Crisis-Management/dp/1578512352/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1503248662&sr=8-1&keywords=Harvard+Business+Review+on+Crisis+Management

Additional readings may be distributed in class

Tentative Course Calendar*

*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar.

August 28, 2017

Week 1

Topic and Content Covered: An introduction to crisis and issues management from a public relations and engagement perspective. Course outline, guest speakers, syllabus and course work will be discussed.

Class assignments and final projects discussed/explained. Each student will be asked to introduce themselves and talk about their learning goals for the semester.

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Reading Assignment:

Media Relations Handbook: Ch. 12 p. 232-264

Four Stages: Ch 1-4 pp. 123

HBR on Crisis Management, Ch. 4 – Right Away and All at Once

HBR on Crisis Management, Ch. 7 – Leadership When There is No One to Ask

**Assignment: Draft personal biography/goals
Identify issue/client for your communications plan**

September 4, 2017

Week 2

Labor Day – No Class – Enjoy the end of summer and the start of college football! Go Irish!

September 11, 2017

Week 2

Topic and Content Covered: Identifying the nature of a crisis. Discussion of real-time examples of challenging issues and crisis including audience identification, landscape and threat analysis.

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 4

Reading Assignment Today: The Four Stages Section V pp. 183-201

Assignment: Issue Identification Assignment – identify the crisis/high stakes issue you will be designing your communications plan around.

September 18, 2017

Week 3

Topic and Content Covered: The anatomy of an issue or crisis and the corresponding issue management or crisis response campaign.

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 4

Reading Assignment:

Four Stages Section II pp 47-80

Assignment: Select your client for whom you will be writing your crisis/high stakes communications plan for.

Assignment(s) Due Today:

Issue Identification assignment - Identify your crisis/high stakes issue and illustrate in **one page** why and for whom it is a crisis/issue.

September 25, 2017

Week 4

Topic and Content Covered: Communications considerations in challenging times. The elements of a good crisis/high stakes communications plan? What is the strategy? Who is the crisis/high stakes team? Who is the audience, who are the communicators, and what do they need to hear and share?

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 4, 5

Reading Assignment:

Media Relations Handbook Ch 1 pp. 3-19

Four Stages Section III pp. 85-116

HBR on Crisis Management, Ch. 1

**Assignment: Write the client strategy for your crisis/high stakes communications plan
Identify the various audiences you will need to communicate with in your plan.**

Assignment(s) Due Today:

Client Selection - What client in the aforementioned crisis/high stakes environment will you work for throughout the semester? In **one page** identify the client, provide background information on the individual or organization and illustrate why this client should care about the issue at hand.

October 2, 2017

Week 5

Topic and Content Covered: Messaging plan for your crisis/high stakes situation. What will be your message and what avenues will you use to get your messaging out to various stakeholders? How and what will you communicate to various stakeholders?

Guest Speaker: Mike McCurry, Former White House Communications Director

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 3, 4, 5

Reading Assignment: Four Stages Section IV pp. 121-141
Media Relations Handbook Ch 3. Pp 49-63
Social Media and Crisis pp. 99-112

Assignment: Draft the messaging for your client plan. This should include a core message/talking points, Qs & As, spokesperson identification and training plan, holding statements, and social media content.

October 9, 2017 – Fall Break – Enjoy!

October 16, 2017

Week 6

Topic and Content Covered: Social Media during a crisis/high stakes event.

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Guest Speaker: Andy Oare, Vice President, Glover Park Group

Reading Assignment: Social Media and Crisis pp. 127-180.

Media Relations Handbook pp. 119-155

Four Stages pp. 203-235

Assignment: Draft the social media plan for your crisis/high stakes plan.

October 23, 2017

Week 7

Topic and Content Covered: Media relations in a crisis/high stakes environment.

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Reading Assignment: Media Relations Handbook pp. 21-45. pp. 67-88 p. 281

Assignment: Draft the media relations plan for your client project. Include a media relations strategic plan, media protocol, priority journalist spreadsheet, media training guide and tactical action plan.

October 30, 2017

Week 8

Topic and Content Covered: Case Studies in Issue and Crisis Management (Student Projects)

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Reading Assignment: n/a

Assignment(s) Due Today: Crisis/Issue Case Study - Prepare a report that fully articulates the sensitivities and issues related to your selected issue and client. Identify the stakeholders internal and external, provide historical context on the issue as it relates to the public and the client.

November 6, 2017

Week 9

Topic and Content Covered: Media Tools and Tactics

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Reading Assignment: Media Relations Handbook 91-115. pp. 171-183

Assignment: Draft media tactics content for your client plan.

November 13, 2017

Week 10

Topic and Content Covered: The politics of a crisis/high stakes event – the boss, lawyers, activists, lobbyists, congressional investigations, media bias towards your client.

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Reading Assignment: Media Relations Handbook pp. 159-168. pp 187-200.

Assignment: Identify and address the political landscape of your client plan.

November 20, 2017

Week 11

Topic and Content Covered: Third Party Allies and Vendors

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Reading Assignment: TBD

Assignment: Develop a plan and budget for third-party ally identification and engagement and third-party vendor engagement.

November 27, 2017

Week 12

Topic and Content Covered: Ethics in crisis/high stakes communications: In the eye of the beholder

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Reading Assignment: Media Relations Handbook pp. 265-279

Assignment: What are the ethical challenges to your client plan? What are your personal ethical boundaries?

December 4, 2017

Week 13

Topic and Content Covered: Open Forum on crisis and issue management. Question and answer session related to final projects/presentations

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

December 11, 2017

Week 14

Topic and Content Covered: Final Presentations

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 5

Assignment(s) Due Today: Final Projects

Copyright Statement

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.