

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations

Spring Semester

January 16 – April 30, 2018

Sustainability Communications

PSPR 6207

Wednesday, 7:10 – 9:40 p.m.

Alexandria Graduate Education Center

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

Megan Kindelan

Contact Information

Phone Number: 863.289.9523

Email Address: megan.kindelan@gmail.com

Communication

I will be available before and after class each week to address any questions or concerns (preferred). During business hours, students can also reach me via email/G-chat or schedule a phone call.

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between us. Students can access the course site at 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 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 me if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at <http://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class

If we experience an emergency during class time, we will try to stay in our classroom until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave the building, we will meet in front of Starbucks to account for everyone. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify me IN ADVANCE. Please make sure you turn in any assignments due that week on time to receive full credit. Regardless of the reason for missing class, you will not be able to make up missed class participation points.

Out-of-Class/Independent Learning Expectations

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 | 703.299.4150

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. Leadership in communications on a sound ethical and financial basis;
4. Working with management and staff/vendors to develop and manage the implementation of effective communications strategies.

Course Description and Overview

This course will define and examine sustainability and corporate social responsibility (or “doing well by doing good”), explore the unique communications challenges it presents and offer practical suggestions and tactics to respond to this movement. This will be accomplished through lectures, readings, independent and group learning, access to leading practitioners in the field and student research and discussion.

We will delve into what makes sustainability communications effective and help you discern why trying to maintain the appearance of doing good while continuing to operate in the old, less socially and environmentally sensitive ways is unacceptable in today’s world. Corporations, trade associations, non-profits and the government are being asked to be accountable to a whole new group of stakeholders. Public relations and communications professionals are the logical people to prepare strategic communications and operational plans that reflect their organization's commitment to sustainability communications that enhance their employer's reputation. To not do so is at best a missed opportunity and at worst a potential way to expose your organization to the harsh glare of the public spotlight.

The class will feature in-class activities, current research and guest speakers from major organizations with practical advice on meeting this challenge in the global marketplace. We will utilize case studies, professional journals and research to explore the topic and develop a comprehensive sustainability communications plan as the final project for the class.

As such, this course will reinforce and support student achievement in SPR Program Objectives three and four.

Course Learning Objectives

By the completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Explain the history of sustainability communications and how it is applied in today’s communications landscape.
2. Gain an understanding of the scope of sustainability communications issues and develop a multi-stakeholder perspective in viewing these issues.
3. Explore the connections among organizational strategy and sustainability communications.
4. Critique and analyze current sustainability communications activity by companies and organizations from a knowledgeable perspective.
5. Analyze and recommend sustainability communications activities and communication strategies for companies, organizations or individuals.

- Design and develop a comprehensive sustainability communications plan for a company or organization and recommend a structure to measure its outcome.

Course Expectations

- Work due must be turned in on Blackboard before the beginning of class (7:10 p.m.) on the assigned date. All other assignments due at other times (such as your ITN memos and comments) or due via hard copy will be stated here in the syllabus.
- Any assignment that is late will be marked down 10 points each day until it is turned in. I will only grant extensions for emergency situations that I know about in advance. It is your responsibility to plan ahead, notify me and turn assignments in early if you will be out of town or have a work event etc.
- Attention to detail is important (especially in PR!), so please make sure your question isn't already answered in a Blackboard announcement or in this syllabus before contacting me.
- Class should be a time to be present and focused on the presentations, guest speakers, and class discussions. Please no side conversations with classmates, looking at your phone, or using your laptop for anything other than taking notes.
- All work for this class should be submitted in Microsoft Word (specs: double-spaced, 1" margins, page numbers, 12-point Times New Roman font).
- Neatness, punctuation, spelling and grammar are vitally important in our profession (and therefore in this class). Please take time to edit your work carefully before submitting it to me. This is a graduate-level course and I expect graduate-level work.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Attendance and Participation	Ongoing	26 (1 point for attendance and 1 point for participation x 13 classes = 26)
Weekly Assignments	Ongoing	15 (2 points x 1 UN preso = 2) (2 points x 5 ITN memos = 10) (2 points x 1 ITN preso = 2) (1 point x 1 "Top 10" list = 1)
Pop Quizzes	Surprise!	9 (3 points x 3 quizzes = 9)
Midterm Paper	March 7	25
Final Project	April 25	25
TOTAL		100
Extra Credit (Course Evaluation Submitted) <i>(I just need screenshot of submittal slide, your evaluation is completely confidential)</i>		2

GSPM Grading Scale

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 will be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).*

Required Text and Learning Materials

1. *Managing Corporate Social Responsibility: A Communication Approach.* (W. Timothy Coombs & Sherry J. Holladay).
2. [CSRwire.com](http://www.csrwire.com). Create a free CSRwire account and sign up for the CSRwire Daily News Alert and read daily.
3. Other required reading materials (including relevant articles, blogs, essays, and research studies) are linked below in the "Course Calendar." Additional reading assignments will also be distributed in class or on Blackboard throughout the semester.

Assignments (will be graded in terms of writing quality, analysis, and insightful content)

1. "UN Sustainable Development Goals" Presentation
 - a. In week 1, each student will be assigned one or several (depending on class size) UN Sustainable Development Goals. You will research the goal(s) assigned to you and present to the class in week 2.
2. CSR "In the News" Memos
 - a. Write a 500-1,000 word memo to me about a current sustainability communications initiative (your CSRwire Daily News Alerts should be helpful here in obtaining ideas for topics). Analyze the challenges, response strategies, execution and assessment. Back up your points with content from the lectures and readings. These memos must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on Monday to Blackboard (and also via e-mail to me). Students should read the memos and write two substantive and instructive comments on the

memos of your choice by noon on Wednesday. The most interesting memos/comment threads will be discussed in class that night.

3. CSR “In the News” Presentation
 - a. Pick your favorite “CSR in the News” initiative that you profiled and prepare a 2-3 minute presentation for the class. Highlight what worked well and what could have been improved in the campaign. If you picked one of your earlier memos, are there any updates? Back up your points with content from the lectures and readings.
4. Midterm Paper
 - a. Choose a company or organization whose sustainability communications practices and initiatives you will analyze. Write a 10-page paper providing an overview of the sustainability communications strategies and initiatives of the company, analyzing one specific initiative in-depth and providing recommendations for next steps. Back up your points with content from the lectures and readings.
5. Final Project Outline
 - a. Provide a bulleted outline to me of your final project, including company/organization selected, an outline of your communications plan, and supporting references.
6. Final Project
 - a. Design and develop a comprehensive sustainability communications plan for a company or organization.

Course Calendar*

**I reserve 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 via in-class announcements and posts on Blackboard.

**Please note we will have guest speakers, particularly post-midterm. I will announce the guest speakers in class and on Blackboard.*

January 17 (Week 1)

Class Content: Introductions; Overview of the Syllabus; Sustainability Communications Defined (aka the case for doing at least some good); [Sustainability @ GW](#); [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Reading Due: None

Assignment(s) Due: None

January 24 (Week 2)

Class Content: Corporate Social Initiatives: An Overview

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; [22 Great Examples of Socially Responsible Businesses](#); [The Six Types of Corporate Social Initiatives](#); [The State of the Sustainability Profession, 2016](#) (please log-in to download report)

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 1 – “UN Sustainable Development Goals” Presentation (presented in class)

January 31 (Week 3)

Class Content: Corporate Cause Promotions: Increasing Awareness and Concern for Social Causes

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; Coombs & Holladay Chapters 1 and 2; [Top 10 Types of Cause Promotions](#); [Ikea and Better Shelter Sending Housing to Refugees](#); [3 Stories of Advancing Causes—And Profits](#)

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 2 – “CSR in the News” Memo (Monday, 1/29, by 11:59 p.m.); 2 comments (Wednesday, 1/31, by noon)

February 7 (Week 4)

Class Content: Cause-Related Marketing: Making Contributions to Causes Based on Product Sales

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; Coombs & Holladay Chapters 3 and 4; [Subway, Coca-Cola Launch Clean Water Cause Marketing Campaign](#); [7 Tips For Your Next Cause Marketing Campaign](#); [Buy a Lady a Drink](#); [Get into the Pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month](#)

Assignment(s) Due: Midterm Paper Topic Approval (bring hard copy to class)

February 14 (Week 5)

Class Content: Corporate Social Marketing: Supporting Behavior Change Campaigns

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; [Corporate Social Marketing: Benefiting Individuals, Society & the Corporation](#); [How2Recycle Program](#); [Helping Deliver the First Tobacco-Free Generation](#); [Diageo Aiming to Driving Home Dangers of Drunk Driving](#)

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 3 – “CSR in the News” Memo (Monday, 2/12, by 11:59 p.m.); 2 comments (Wednesday, 2/14, by noon)

February 21 (Week 6)

Class Content: Corporate Philanthropy: Making a Direct Contribution to a Cause

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; [Corporate Giving Trends and Best Practices](#); [10 Companies Doing Corporate Philanthropy Right](#); [Workers Remind Companies ‘It’s Better to Give Than to Receive’](#)

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 4 – “CSR in the News” Memo (Monday, 2/19, by 11:59 p.m.); 2 comments (Wednesday, 2/21, by noon)

February 28 (Week 7)

Class Content: Community Volunteering: Employees Donating Their Time and Talents

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; [The Business Case for Employee Volunteer and Skills Giving Programs](#); [How Corporate Volunteering Programs Benefit Everyone](#); [Four Questions to Ask Yourself Before Setting Up an Employee Volunteer Program](#)

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 5 – “CSR in the News” Memo (Monday, 2/26, by 11:59 p.m.); 2 comments (Wednesday, 2/28, by noon)

March 7 (Week 8)

Class Content: Socially Responsible Business Practices

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; [TerraCycle, P&G Partner in a Love-Hate Relationship with Trash](#); [GM Exceeds Landfill-Free Goal](#); [Adidas’s New Ocean Plastic Shoes](#); [Why Colgate and Nestle are Setting an Internal Price on Water](#); [Nestle’s Switch to Cage-Free Eggs](#)

Assignment(s) Due: **MIDTERM PAPER (submit on Blackboard no later than 7:10 p.m.)**

March 14 (Week 9)

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

March 21 (Week 10)

Class Content: Creating a Comprehensive Sustainability Communications Plan/Implementing CSR

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; Coombs & Holladay Chapters 5, 6, and 7; [How Our Company Connected Our Strategy to Sustainability Goals](#)

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 6 – “CSR in the News” Memo (Monday, 3/19, by 11:59 p.m.); 2 comments (Wednesday, 3/21, by noon)

March 28 (Week 11)

Class Content: The Power of Partnerships

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; Coombs & Holladay Chapter 8; [Expedia Takes Sick Children on Thrilling Real-Time Adventures – Without Leaving the Hospital](#); [Hero Miles](#); [Google DeepMind Announces New Research Partnership to Fight Breast Cancer](#)

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 7 – “CSR in the News” Presentation (presented in class)

April 4 (Week 12)

Class Content: Show Me the Money

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; [Closing the Sustainability-Investor Relations Gap](#); [This College Class is an Object Lesson in Sustainable Investing](#)

Assignment(s) Due: Final Project Outline (bring hard copy to class as project consultations will occur during class)

April 11 (Week 13)

Class Content: Sustainability Reporting

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; [The Rise of Corporate Sustainability Goals: Some Hard Data](#); [Southwest Airlines: The One Report](#); [IKEA Sustainability Report FY16](#); [Sustainable Innovation at Nike](#)

April 18 (Week 14)

Class Content: **NO CLASS – work on your final project!**

April 25 (Week 15)

Class Content: Course Wrap-up: Sustainability Communications Best Practices and Recommendations

Reading Due: CSRwire Daily News Alert for week; [The 9 \(or 10\) Keys to Successful Sustainability Leadership](#)

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 8 – Your “Top 10” List of Sustainability Communications Best Practices (bring hard copy to class to discuss and turn in); **FINAL PROJECT (submit via Blackboard no later than 7:10 p.m.)**

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.