

# The Graduate School of Political Management

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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## M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations

Spring Semester

January 13 – April 27, 2019

## Sustainability Communications

PSPR 6207

Wednesday, 7:10 – 9:40 p.m.

Arlington Graduate Education Center

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### BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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#### Instructors

Megan Kindelan and Eileen Lin

#### Contact Information

Megan Kindelan

863.289.9523

[megan.kindelan@gmail.com](mailto:megan.kindelan@gmail.com)

Eileen Lin

571.314.4660

[eileen.lin@gmail.com](mailto:eileen.lin@gmail.com)

#### Communication

We will be available before and after class each week to address any questions or concerns (preferred). During business hours, students can also reach us via email 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](http://blackboard.gwu.edu). Support for Blackboard is available at 202.994.4948 or [helpdesk.gwu.edu](http://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 <http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

### **University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays**

- Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.
- Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
- Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

### **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 <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

### **Title IX: Confidentiality and Responsible Employee Statement**

The George Washington University (GWU) and its faculty are committed to helping create a safe and open learning environment for all students. If you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. GWU strongly encourages all members of the community to take action, seek support and report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Office. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty members are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Mental Health Services through Colonial Health (counselors are available 24/7 at 202-994-5300 or you can make an appointment to see a counselor in person.). For more information about reporting options and resources at GWU and the community, please visit <https://haven.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 at The Nature Conservancy (4245 Fairfax Dr. Arlington VA 22203) to account for everyone. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: [www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/](http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/).

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss a class, it is your responsibility to notify both of us 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 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 to, 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](mailto:lparnell@gwu.edu) | 703.299.4150

Dr. Jack Prostko  
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development  
College of Professional Studies  
[jackp@gwu.edu](mailto:jackp@gwu.edu) | 202.994.3592

Suzanne Farrand  
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM  
[sfarrand@gwu.edu](mailto:sfarrand@gwu.edu) | 202.994.9309

## **THE COURSE**

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### **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 in the most equitable way 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 social and environmental issues and develop a multi-stakeholder perspective in viewing these issues.
3. Explore the connections among organizational strategy and corporate responsibility.
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.
6. 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. We will only grant extensions for emergency situations that we know about in advance. It is your responsibility to plan ahead, notify us 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 us.
- 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 us. This is a graduate-level course and we expect graduate-level work.

### Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Attendance and Participation	Ongoing	<b>26</b> (1 point for attendance and 1 point for participation x 13 classes = 26)
Weekly Assignments	Ongoing	<b>15</b> (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!	<b>9</b> (3 points x 3 quizzes = 9)
Midterm Paper	March 4	<b>25</b>
Final Project	April 22	<b>25</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>
Extra Credit (Course Evaluation Submitted)		<i>2 (We just need screenshot of submittal slide, your evaluation is completely confidential)</i>

## 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. [CSRwire.com](http://CSRwire.com). Create a free CSRwire account and sign up for the CSRwire Daily News Alert and read daily.
2. [Creating Shared Value](#). What can companies do to affect positive change in social and environmental issues to improve the competitiveness of their business by connecting business, social/environmental challenge and opportunity.
3. [Case Study](#). Assessing and managing sustainability in international perspective: corporate sustainability across cultures – towards a strategic framework implementation approach.
4. [Case Study](#): India’s Mandatory CSR Spending and its Impact.
5. [Reputation Institute](#): How to Build Credibility Through Corporate Responsibility.
6. [Greenbiz](#): Does Water Stewardship Lead to Brand Value.
7. [Cause Talk Radio Podcast](#): Stay up to date on all things corporate social impact and purpose-focused marketing, including trends, tactics and need-to-know news with Engage for Good’s Megan Strand in this weekly podcast.

\*Additional reading assignments will be assigned via 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 us about a sustainability communications initiative topic studied in class. Your reading list above will be helpful in finding initiatives. 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. 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 presented and 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 update for the class. Highlight what worked well and what could have been improved in the campaign based upon your learnings from class. 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 us 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\***

*\*We reserve the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with reading and homework assignments and all adjustments to the course calendar via Blackboard.*

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

### **January 15 (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 22 (Week 2)**

Class Content: Identifying, understanding and analyzing an array of social and environmental issues

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

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

### **January 29 (Week 3)**

Class Content: Cause Marketing: Increasing Awareness, brand alignment, and support base through marketing, advertisement and sales

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 2 – CSR “In the News” Memo (Monday, 1/27, by 11:59 p.m.); 2 comments (Wednesday, 1/29, by noon)

### **February 5 (Week 4)**

Class Content: Philanthropy and art of fundraising

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

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

### **February 12 (Week 5)**

Class Content: Transforming business practice and policy support

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 3 – CSR “In the News” Memo (Monday, 2/10, by 11:59 p.m.); 2 comments (Wednesday, 2/12, by noon)

### **February 19 (Week 6)**

Class Content: Innovation and impact investment

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 4 – CSR “In the News” Memo (Monday, 2/17, by 11:59 p.m.); 2 comments (Wednesday, 2/19, by noon)

### **February 26 (Week 7)**

Class Content: Through authenticity and equity lens: Understanding of the importance of equity consideration in social and environmental issues.

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

### **March 4 (Week 8)**

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

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

Assignment(s) Due: Assignment 5 – CSR “In the News” Memo (Monday, 2/24, by 11:59 p.m.); 2 comments (Wednesday, 2/26, by noon)

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

### **March 11 (Week 9)**

Class Content: Strategic communication through storytelling, crisis management, ethics, persuasion (behavior change campaigns)

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

### **March 18 (Week 10)**

**SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

### **March 25 (Week 11)**

Class Content: Sustainability Reporting

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

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

### **April 1 (Week 12)**

Class Content: Strategic Communications Planning

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

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

### **April 8 (Week 13)**

Class Content: Campaign management and metrics

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

### **April 15 (Week 14)**

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

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

**April 22 (Week 15)**

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

Reading Due: See Blackboard.

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.)**

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**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.*