

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations

Summer Semester 2018

May 22 to July 26

Course Name: Fundamentals of Business and Finance for PR Professionals

Course Number: PSPR 6205

Credits: 3

Class Day/Time: Tuesdays from 7:10 p.m. to 9:40 p.m.

Class Location: Alexandria campus

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

Karen Vahouny

Contact Information

Phone Number: (703) 624-2674

Primary Email Address: kvahouny@gmail.com

Alternate Email Address: kvahouny@gwu.edu

Communication

Email is the best way to reach me, and I make it a priority to respond on the same day, if at all possible. If you'd like to talk about something in more depth, I'd suggest a phone conversation, and you can use my cellphone number, noted above. Please leave a message if I don't answer it, and I'll return the call promptly. If you'd like to meet face to face, I can be available before or after class or by appointment.

Important: ***Please use my gmail address (kvahouny@gmail.com), as opposed to the GW address.*** You'll see emails from me via the GWU address when I send emails from Blackboard to the whole class. However, I'll use my gmail address for all other communication with you. ***If you need to reach me quickly, always use the kvahouny@gmail.com address.***

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site regularly throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructors and the students. Students can access the course site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

Note: I post all assignments, PowerPoints, articles (additional reading), announcements and grades on Blackboard.

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, taking quizzes, 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://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.

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 your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at www.gwu.edu/~dss.

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 in front of Potbellys 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

Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss a class, you are responsible for notifying me and for making sure any assignments due that week are sent to me on time to receive full credit. There are team assignments, so you need to coordinate with your teammates if you expect to be absent for a class. It is also your responsibility to check Blackboard for assignment details and announcements, to get lecture notes from a classmate, and to complete the readings as assigned. Attendance (and active involvement) is a significant part of the participation grade. More details on attendance will be covered in the first class session.

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. The required reading for the class meetings and the written response papers or projects are expected to take, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. That means that over the course of the semester,

students will spend at least 25 hours in instructional (in-class) time and at least 70 hours in associated reading, class preparation and assignments.

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 explore the fundamentals of business that can be applied to small, mid-size and large organizations, public relations agencies, and start-up consultancies. Students will learn how to effectively integrate communications/PR skills with a financial "lens" to real-world business situations. The course will include the disciplines of leadership, human resource management, marketing, economics, and finance and accounting, with an emphasis on financial planning and budgeting. The combination of the textbook, relevant articles, in-class discussion, guest speakers and practical assignments will give you a strong understanding of the challenges facing today's business leaders.

Course Learning Objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Understand and interpret basic financial information
2. Learn about the structure and interrelationship of the financial reports used in business

3. Identify the key sections of an annual report and what criteria are used by investors in evaluating the opportunities for startup companies and ongoing performance of public companies
4. Use and understand financial tools for evaluating trends
5. Develop and oversee an organizational budget, and learn how PR firms develop and manage their budgets
6. Understand the rationale for a business plan, and differentiate between a strategic plan and an operational plan, as well as their relationship to communication planning and activities
7. Understand the considerations for managing financial resources, from internal reporting to raising capital

The course will also address:

- The global business environment and economic issues that can have an impact on business success or failure
- The challenges and opportunities of an entrepreneur
- Leadership , management, human resources and marketing
- The development of successful communication plans and programs

Course Requirements

There will be both team and individual assignments, as well as in-class discussions. Three online quizzes will test and reinforce the lessons in the textbook. There also is a graded online discussion, with students expected to post links, written summaries, and responses to other student posts. Some classes will also require advance preparation (such as developing questions for a guest speaker). There will be a final written exam (assigned in advance) that will address key, broad concepts from the course. The final exam should be prepared using Times New Roman, 12 point type, and it should be double-spaced.

Deadlines: It is extremely important that assignments are completed on time. I *may* allow an assignment to be submitted up to one week after a due date but only if a student has notified me prior to the deadline and has explained the reason for needing an extension. Late work, however, will receive a reduced grade. If an assignment is turned in past the deadline (with no advance notice) or if it is more than a week late (when pre-arranged with instructor), it will receive a 0. The ability to follow instructions, organization, content, clarity, punctuation and grammar will all be important considerations in assignment grading. You'll submit your work electronically, and I will provide feedback. Grades will be posted on Blackboard.

Note: We will use the APA style in written assignments.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Team project 1	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7	Project 1: June 12 Project 2:	20%

Team project 2	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7	July 17 (in class)	10%
Online assignment 1	1, 2, 3, 4, 7	Part 1: June 5	5%
		Part 2: June 12	2.5%
Online assignment 2	1-7	Part 1: July 17	5%
		Part 2: July 24	2.5%
Quizzes	1-7	June 19 July 10 July 24	15% (5% each)
Final exam (essay)	1-7	July 26	20%
Attendance and participation	1-7	Entire semester	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 will be penalized for the late submission of assignments.

Required Text and Learning Materials

1. Finance for Non-Financial Managers SECOND EDITION (author: Gene Siciliano)
McGraw-Hill: copyright 2015
2. Business Essentials for Strategic Communicators (authors: Matthew W. Ragas and Ron Culp)
Palgrave Macmillan: copyright 2014

Note: If you don't have a copy of the APA style guide, you should be sure to get one. It is: Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition. As noted earlier, that is the guide that will be used when preparing and grading written assignments.

Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials

There will be business periodical articles assigned throughout the semester.

Tentative Course Calendar*

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

Note: I will provide detailed instructions on the team and individual assignments noted below, and all supporting information also will be posted on Blackboard. This also includes links to articles, as well as any timely news or videos that may occur as the semester progresses. All reading assignments are due before the start of the subsequent week's class.

Schedule Details

Class Date

Week 1 – May 22

Topic and Content Covered: Class introduction

- Class overview and learning objectives
- Case study/introduction to team project
- Team formation/kickoff: Team project #1 (business challenge and reputation)

Learning Objective Addressed: 1

Reading Assigned Today (due next week): Chapters 1 and 2 of the Siciliano textbook; the Foreword, Preface and Chapter 1 of the Ragas/Culp book.

Assignment Due next Week: Set up Google alert on a public company

Assignment starting today:

- Team project #1: Business challenge: analysis and recommendations. Team presentations will be made during class on June 12.

Class Date

Week 2 – May 29

Topic and Content Covered: Financial reporting overview

- Chapter highlights
- Personal finance overview
- In-class discussion: Annual reports
- Other reports: proxy and prospectus
- Impact of regulation: Sarbanes Oxley and Reg FD

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 3

Reading Due Today: Chapters 1 and 2 (Siciliano); Foreword, Preface and Chapter 1 (Ragas/Culp)

Reading Assigned Today (due next week): Chapter 3 of Siciliano textbook; Chapter 8 and 9 of Ragas/Culp book; and Warren Buffett article (*posted on Blackboard*)

Assignment Due Today: Set up Google alert

Assignment Due Next Week: Online assignment #1, part 1 (*will be on Blackboard Discussions*)

Class Date

Week 3 – June 5

Topic and Content Covered: Financial statements (part 2)

- Reading highlights
- The leader's role in financial communication
- CSR and video reports

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapter 3 (Siciliano); Chapters 8 and 9 (Ragas/Culp); Warren Buffett article

Reading Assigned Today (due next week): Chapters 4 and 5 (Siciliano); Chapter 6 (Ragas/Culp); Ford/Mulally article (*posted on Blackboard*)

Assignment Due Today: Online assignment #1, part 1

Assignments Due Next Week:

- Online assignment #1, part 2 (*responses on Discussion board to three student posts*)
- Team project #1: Presentations in class

Class Date

Week 4 – June 12

Topic and Content Covered: Leadership and business challenges; corporate reputation Team project #1 presentations

- Reading highlights; fixed and variance costs/variance analysis
- Ford case study
- Monthly budget follow-up

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4

Reading Due Today: Chapters 4 and 5 (Siciliano); Chapter 6 (Ragas/Culp); Ford/Mulally article

Reading Assigned Today: Chapters 6 and 7 (Siciliano); Chapters 3 and 5 (Ragas/Culp)

Assignments Due Today:

- Article for class discussion
- Online assignment #1, part 2 (three responses)

Assignments Due Next Week:

- Quiz #1 (Siciliano chapters 1-5 and assigned articles); *will be on Blackboard Tests section*
- Listen to the most recent quarterly financial results (“earnings”) conference call for the company you selected for your online discussion. We’ll be discussing this in class.

Class Date

Week 5 – June 19

Topic and Content Covered: Financial communication tools and the opportunity for integrated messages

- Guest speaker (investor relations)
- Investor conference call: themes and takeaways
- Overview: financial communication options and opportunities
- Reading highlights

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 4, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapters 6 and 7 (Siciliano); Chapters 3 and 5 (Ragas/Culp)

Reading Assigned Today: Chapters 9 (pages 135-144) and 12 (Siciliano); Chapter 10 (Ragas/Culp)

Assignments Due Today:

- Quiz #1

Assignments Due Next Week:

- Develop a question to ask next week’s guest speaker

Class Date

Week 6 – June 26

Topic and Content Covered: Communication and PR: Measurement and Evaluation

- Guest speaker (research, measurement and evaluation)
- Reading highlights; return on investment and budgeting
- Team breakout: communication/PR measurement and evaluation examples

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 4, 5, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapters 9 (pages 135-144) and 12 (Siciliano); Chapter 10 (Ragas/Culp)

Assignments Due Today:

- Develop a question for tonight's guest speaker

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 10 (Siciliano); PR agency article

Assignment Due Next Week

- Bring an article from a business periodical to summarize and share; it should relate to one of the prior chapters or articles we've read to date

Class Date

Week 7 – July 3

Topic and Content Covered: The business of the business; why PR/communications professionals need to be well-versed in business and finance

- Reading highlights
- Online discussion #1 debrief/discussion
- Team breakouts: the article you selected and sharing/discussion (article summary and highlights, along with how it relates to a previous reading assignment)
- Final exam expectations/assignment

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 4, 6

Reading Due Today: Chapter 10 (Siciliano), plus PR agency article

Assignment Due Today:

- Bring and discuss article you selected

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 11 (Siciliano) and communication planning article

Assignments Due Next Week:

- Quiz 2: Siciliano chapters 6, 7, 9 (pages 135-144), and 12

Assignment Starting Today:

- Final exam (essay exam) will be posted today. Due by 12 midnight on Thursday, July 26

Class Date

Week 8 – July 10

Topic and Content Covered: Business planning and key success factors

- Guest speaker
- Reading highlights
- In-class planning and budgeting exercise

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapter 11 (Siciliano) and communication planning article

Assignment Due Today:

Quiz 2: Siciliano chapters 6, 7, 9 (pages 135 to 144), and 12

Reading Assigned Today: Chapters 13 and 14 (Siciliano), SBA link

Assignment Due Next Week:

- Online assignment #2, initial post

Class Date

Week 9 – July 17

Topic and Content Covered: Building a successful business and raising capital

- Perspectives of an entrepreneur
- Team project 2 (in class)
- Reading highlights
- Course recap

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapters 13 and 14 (Siciliano), SBA link

Assignment Due Today:

- Online assignment #2, initial post

Reading Due Next Week: None

Assignment Due Next Week:

- Quiz 3: Chapters 10, 11, 13 and 14 (Siciliano)
- Plus, next week's class will be online only (no in-person), with the online assignment #2 (responses) due during our normal class time.

Class Date

Week 10 – July 24

No in-person class this week. Instead, you'll be working on responses for the online project #2, part 2, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. this evening.

Reading Due Today: None

Assignment Due Today (occurring during class time as an online project/online class):

- Quiz #3: Chapters 10, 11, 13 and 14 (Siciliano)
- Online assignment #2, part 2 (to occur during class time from 7:10 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.)

FINAL EXAM

- Due by midnight on Thursday, July 26

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.