

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations

Summer Semester 2020

May 19 to July 21

Fundamentals of Business and Finance for PR Professionals

PSPR 6205

Credits: 3

Class Day/Time: WebEx Chat on Tuesdays from 8 to 9 p.m.

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

Karen Vahouny

Contact Information

Phone Number: 703-624-2674

Email Address: kvahouny@gmail.com

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. Feel free to use my cellphone number, noted above, for calls or texts. If you call, I'll always try to answer, but if I'm tied up, please leave a message and I'll return the call promptly.

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. You are expected to check the site regularly throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for 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.

I use the following Blackboard sections: Announcements, Syllabus, WebEx, Tests, Class folders, Assignments and Grades.

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 your instructor 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

N/A for this semester, since we're doing class virtually.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss a class, you are responsible for notifying me ahead of time; this is part of your overall class participation grade. Also, if you need to miss a class, you are still responsible for making sure any assignments (discussions, quizzes, etc.) due that week are posted on time to receive full credit. It is your responsibility to check Blackboard for assignment details and announcements and to complete the readings as assigned. Attendance, preparation for weekly chats, and online (non-graded) discussions comprise 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 one hour per week in the WebEx class. Class preparation, required reading, graded and ungraded discussions, quizzes and assignments 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 at least 70 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 & 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.

Graduate School Expectations

Students enrolled in a graduate program should take their academic responsibilities seriously and be prepared to meet the following expectations:

1. Utilize effective time management skills so as to complete and submit their assignments on their required due dates and times.
2. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.
3. Understand how to properly format in-text citations and references for resources and information integrated into their written assignments.

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, culture, marketing, economics, and finance and

accounting, with an emphasis on financial planning and budgeting. The combination of the textbooks, relevant articles, in-class discussion, guest speakers and practical assignments will give you a strong understanding of the challenges facing today's business leaders and will prepare you for leadership positions in communications and public relations.

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 review an annual report, investor conference call and financial news release.
4. Learn how financial indicators are used to identify trends
5. Understand how to develop an organizational/program budget
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
8. Understand how public companies are valued and what metrics are used to evaluate private companies and public relations firms

The course will also address:

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

Course Requirements

There will be one individual assignment that will address a number of the learning objectives. There are two graded online discussions that will deal with practical, timely material, with students expected to post links, written summaries, and responses to other student posts. Three online quizzes will test and reinforce the lessons in the textbook. There will be a final written essay exam (assigned in advance) that will address key, broad concepts from the course.

The weekly WebEx classes will also require some advance preparation (such as developing questions or reviewing a video.) Ungraded online discussions will also support the class learning and be integrated into the WebEx chats. As noted earlier, all of these are considered in the class participation grade.

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 I support the rationale for 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 and address all the requirements; organization; content; clarity; and writing quality, punctuation and

grammar are all important considerations in 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
<u>Individual Project</u> This will combine research and a PowerPoint presentation; it relates to an organizational crisis and its qualitative and quantitative impact.	1, 2, 3, 4, 8	Project 1: July 7	20%
<u>Online discussion 1</u> <i>Annual report</i>	1, 2, 3, 4	Part 1: June 2	10%
		Part 2: June 9	2.5%
<u>Online discussion 2</u> <i>Current business news/event</i>	1-8	Part 1: June 23	10%
		Part 2: June 30	2.5%
<u>Quizzes</u>	1-8	June 16 July 7 July 21	15% (5% each)
<u>Final exam (essay)</u>	1-8	July 23	20%
<u>Class participation</u> WebEx chats: attendance, preparation and contributions; ungraded online discussions	1-8	Entire semester	20%
Total			100%

The 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 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 articles/videos 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 learning activities/assignments noted below, and all supporting information also will be posted on Blackboard. This includes links to articles, as well as any timely news or videos that may occur as the semester progresses. **All readings and graded assignments/quizzes are due before the start of the subsequent week's WebEx class.** There will also be several ungraded online discussions and small assignments (such as watching a video) during the semester that will reinforce the textbooks/readings and will add value to the weekly WebEx chats.

Class Date

Week 1 – May 26

Topic and Content Covered: Class introduction

- Class structure and overview
- Learning activities and assignments

Reading due next week:

- Chapters 1 and 2 of the Siciliano textbook
- Foreword, Preface and Chapter 1 of the Ragas/Culp book

Assignments due next week:

- Set up Google alert on a public company
- Online discussion (ungraded) post – your introductions (*This will be on Blackboard Discussions. We'll discuss during next week's WebEx class.*)

Class Date

Week 2 – May 26

Topic and Content Covered: Financial reporting overview

- Chapter highlights
- Personal finance introduction
- In-class discussion: Annual reports, Form 10-K reports, other financial reports
- Impact of regulation: Sarbanes Oxley and Reg FD

Reading due next week:

- Chapter 3 of Siciliano textbook
- Chapters 8 and 9 of Ragas/Culp book
- Warren Buffett article (*posted in Blackboard folder*)

Assignments due next week:

- Online (graded) discussion, part 1 (*This will be on Blackboard Discussions.*)
- Watch Kawasaki video (*This will be in Blackboard folder; be prepared to discuss during WebEx class on June 2.*)

Assignment starting today:

- Individual assignment: Business crisis challenge: analysis and recommendations. Due date: July 7 before the start of class. (*Details will be posted and your assignment will be submitted in the Assignments section of Blackboard.*)

Class Date

Week 3 – June 2

Topic and Content Covered: Financial statements (part 2) and leadership's role in financial communication

- Reading highlights
- Leadership communication: linkages between overall and financial communication
- CSR and video reports
- Themes/comments on our first (ungraded) online discussion/your introductions

Reading due next week:

- Chapters 4 and 5 (Siciliano)
- Chapter 6 (Ragas/Culp)
- Ford/Mulally article (*Posted in Blackboard folder.*)

Assignments due next week:

- Online discussion 1, part 2 (*respond to two student posts on Blackboard Discussions.*)
- Personal finance "tip" (*We will share/discuss during June 9 WebEx class.*)

Class Date

Week 4 – June 9

Topic and Content Covered: Leadership and business challenges; corporate reputation

- Reading highlights
- Corporate ethics/reputation
- Annual report discussion recap (observations from the online discussion)
- More about Mulally/Ford
- Monthly budget "check-in"
- Online discussion #1: themes and takeaways
- WebEx class: Possible guest speaker

Reading due next week:

- Chapters 6 and 7 (Siciliano)
- Chapters 3 and 5 (Ragas/Culp)

Assignments due next week:

- Quiz #1 (Siciliano chapters 1-5 and assigned articles) (*This will be on Blackboard Tests section.*)
- Online discussion (ungraded post) – using the company you selected for your annual report. It will relate to its most recent investor conference call. (*This will be on Blackboard discussions; we'll discuss this during next week's WebEx class.*)

Class Date

Week 5 – June 16

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

- Reading highlights
- Investor conference call: best practices and thoughts from your ungraded online discussion
- Online discussion 1 (annual reports): themes and takeaways
- Overview: other financial communication options and opportunities

Reading due next week:

- Chapters 9 (only pages 135-144) and 12 (Siciliano)
- Chapter 10 (Ragas/Culp)

Assignments due next week:

- Online discussion #2 (graded), part 1 (*on Blackboard Discussions.*)
- Review the most recent quarterly earnings release for the company you selected for your annual report/online discussion #1. (*Be prepared to discuss during next week's WebEx chat.*)

Class Date

Week 6 – June 23

Topic and Content Covered: Communication and PR: measurement and evaluation

- Reading highlights; return on investment and budgeting
- Communication goal-setting, measurement and evaluation
- Earnings releases: best practices and thoughts/observations on the company you'd selected
- WebEx chat: Guest speaker

Reading due next week:

- Chapter 10 (Siciliano)

Assignments due next week:

- Online discussion #2, part 2 (*Respond to two student posts on Blackboard Discussions.*)
- Read Singletary article (*In Blackboard folder; be prepared to discuss during next week's WebEx chat.*)

Class Date

Week 7 – June 30

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

- Reading highlights
- Opportunities for PR/communications professionals with Business 101 foundation
- Investor relations: valuation, investor communications, IR best practices
- Final exam expectations/assignment

Reading due next week:

- Chapter 11 (Siciliano)

- Communication planning article (*In Blackboard folder; be prepared to discuss during next week's WebEx chat.*)

Assignments due next week:

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

Important: Assignment 1 is due by the start of class next week. (*You will post it in the Assignments section of Blackboard.*)

Assignment starting today:

- Final exam (essay exam) will be posted today. Due by 12 midnight on Thursday, July 25

Class Date

Week 8 – July 7

Topic and Content Covered: Business planning and key success factors

- Reading highlights
- Strategic and business planning
- Communication/PR plans – best practices; discussion about the communication planning article
- Online assignment 2 debrief

Reading due next week:

- Chapters 13 and 14 (Siciliano)
- SBA link (*In Blackboard folder; be prepared to discuss during next week's WebEx chat.*)

Assignment due next week:

- Response to entrepreneurship prompts (*Be prepared to discuss during next week's WebEx chat.*)

Class Date

Week 9 – July 14

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

- Reading highlights
- Business success stories
- SBA article discussion
- Perspectives of an entrepreneur
- WebEx Class: Guest speaker

Reading due next week: None

Assignments due next week:

- Quiz 3: Chapters 10, 11, 13 and 14 (Siciliano)
- Online discussion (ungraded post) – relating to business/finance lessons learned and application to your work/your future plans. (*This will be on Blackboard discussions; we'll discuss this during next week's WebEx class.*)

Important: Your final exam is due next Thursday, July 23 (*You will post this in the Assignments section of Blackboard.*)

Class Date

Week 10 – July 21

Topic and Content Covered: Course summary

- Overall Finance and business highlights
- Communication planning/measurement highlights
- Online discussion themes
- Course wrap-up

FINAL EXAM

- Due by midnight on Thursday, July 23

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.