Syllabus

The Graduate School of Political Management
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

PSPR 6204

MEDIA RELATIONS IN A DIGITAL WORLD

SPRING 2021: THURSDAYS, 7:10 – 9:40 p.m.

Instructor:

Robert (Rob) Engle is president of Engle & Co. The company provides creative communication strategies for a number of leading private and public firms and organizations involved in public policy/affairs, real estate, construction, development, high tech, consumer goods, and finance.

Prior to forming Engle & Co., Engle served as a press secretary and legislative aide to Senator Paula Hawkins (FL), Congressman Dan Mica (FL), and Congressman Don Ritter (PA). He also served as director of public relations for a large Washington advertising and marketing agency and as head of public relations for a local American Cancer Society chapter.

He holds a master's degree from Harvard University and is an alumnus of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government; he completed his undergraduate studies in journalism/public relations at the University of Florida.
Contact Information
Email Address: rengle2@gwu.edu - Email me anytime and I will respond within 24 hours, usually much sooner

T/A: Jillian Doody
Email: jilliand@gwu.edu

The Course

Course Overview

This course deconstructs the art and theory of media relations from the public relations and public affairs perspective. Students analyze the state of contemporary media – online and off – and its impact on commerce, politics and the human contract, examining key factors influencing reportorial and editorial coverage of business, government and not-for-profit interests. Special emphasis is on new and emerging digital platforms, the advent of the Internet, the rise of fake citizen journalism and the impact this all has on storytelling.

Students will develop strategic media relations campaigns aimed at publicizing a product, service, idea or issue of an organization by using a variety of traditional and non-traditional digital publicity tools and techniques guided by sound messages and directed to sensible outcomes. These media relations strategies and tactics will help students to achieve organizational or client goals.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Apply new knowledge and skills in media relations and social media in a political, governmental, association or corporate setting
2. Understand the role of media relations in an overall communications plan and strategy.
3. Develop and pitch a news story to the media with a greater chance of success
4. Write effective news releases and press kit materials (print and digital)
5. Evaluate the ethical practices of journalists and communications professionals
6. Foster relationships with key journalists, podcasters and other influencers
7. Develop understanding of digital and social media and content development for media relations
Strategic Public Relations Program Objectives

Upon the completion of the master’s 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; and
4. Working with management and staff/vendors to develop and manage the implementation of effective communications strategies.

Required Texts and Learning Materials

- On Deadline, Managing Media Relations, 5th Ed:
- Selected articles posted in modules on Blackboard

Tentative* Course Calendar:

Week 1 - Feb. 4 class (school starts Feb. 1): 1) Welcome, Course Overview 2) Media Relations Intro: What is media relations and how has the rise of digital/social media influenced it? What is media bias? What does a “win” look like? 3) Tools of the Trade
Readings:
Media Relations Handbook, Chapter 1
On Deadline, Chapters 2 and 4
Introduction to Strategic Public Relations, review/reread Chapter 7

Week 2 - Feb. 11: The Art of Storytelling: Message Development & Spokesperson Selection
Readings:
Media Relations Handbook, Chapters 3 and 7
Assignment 1: Memo: Media Goals, Objectives and Key Messages (instructions and submissions on Blackboard)

Week 3 - Feb. 18: Media Relations Writing: The art of messaging and building your toolbox – from press releases to corporate blogs; from fact sheets to video.
Readings:
Media Relations Handbook: Chapters 4 - 6

Week 4 - Feb. 25: Pitching & Media Training: Building reporter lists, relationship building, blogs and social media
Readings:
On Deadline, Chapter 5
Pollard, C. How To Create An Excellent Media List. Huffington Post.

Assignment 2: Memo: Media List Builder & Media Coverage Analysis

Week 5 - March 4: Materials Matter: Press releases, press advisories, op-eds
Readings:
Media Relations Handbook, Chapter 2
On Deadline, Chapter 3

Week 6 - March 11: Media Interviews: Prepping for the Interview, Framing an Issue, and Dealing With Tough Questions
Readings:
Media Relations Handbook, Chapter 8, Interview Preparation.
Andrew Stanton, The Clues to a Great Story: http://on.ted.com/Stanton

Assignment 3: Memo: Peeps Case Study

Week 7 - March 25: New Approaches - Podcast Outreach, Native Advertising, Paid Digital & Fake News Awareness: Integrating Within the Overall Strategy & Story-telling through photos, videos and infographics
Readings:
George, A. 4 Ways to Get Your Story Out as Newsrooms Are Shrinking. Inc.
Supa, D. W. A Qualitative Examination of the Impact of Social Media on Media Relations Practice (PDF), Public Relations Journal, 8(2).
Week 8 - April 1: Crisis Communications: Managing the News Cycle
Readings:
On Deadline, Chapter 9
Media Relations Handbook, Chapter 12

Week 9 - April 8: Measurement Matters
Readings:
On Deadline, Chapter 10
Pozin, Ilya. 5 Measurement for PR ROI. *Forbes.*
Werner, Mark. The Importance of Measurable Public Relations. *PR News.*

Week 10 - April 15: Course Wrap-Up
_assignment: Memo: Journalist Backgrounder and Q&A Guide

Evaluation and Grading

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Written Assignments (5)</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion assignments (10 - weekly)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Attendance, Preparation and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<td>Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.</td>
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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.

GSPM prepares students for careers in the professional political world. In politics, words and deadlines matter. Excellent written communication skills are essential for success. Every word used, whether it is in a television or radio ad, direct mail piece, social media, or a press release, will be scrutinized. Similarly, deadlines are important. Election Day does not get postponed because a candidate and their campaign are not prepared. There are no “do-overs” because a direct mail piece did not arrive to its intended recipients until after the election was concluded. Students will be best positioned for success in the practical political world if they have developed and exercise excellent written communication and time management skills.

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 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.

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/](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/](https://haven.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 [fill in proximate location] 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/](http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/).

**Attendance Policy**
Because communication practitioners understand the importance of timeliness, ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED ON TIME. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED AND NO EXTENSIONS.

*For medical emergencies and situations, I need to be made aware prior to not after deadlines.*

**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

*Disclaimer: 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.

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.