

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations

Fall Semester
Aug. 31- Dec. 7, 2016

Advanced Writing for Communications Professionals

PSPR 6202

Wednesday, 7:10 – 9:40 p.m.
Alexandria Campus

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

Lesley Lopez
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@LesleyJLopez

Lesley Lopez is a communications professional with experience on Capitol Hill, campaigns, c-suites and newsrooms. She currently serves as the head of global communications for the US-China Business Council, the leading organization for American business in China, and publisher of the award-winning trade magazine China Business Review.

Most recently, she served as the Director of Communications for the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, the official party organization dedicated to winning state legislative seats. Previously, Ms. Lopez served as Communications Director of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the group of 27 Hispanic Members of the House and Senate, dedicated to voicing issues of the Hispanic community in the United States and Puerto Rico. Ms. Lopez also worked as the Director of Surrogate Communication at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, where she collaborated with Obama for America to book media interviews for 100 high-profile surrogates. Prior to her political career, Ms. Lopez was a journalist for nearly a decade, including stints with ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos, BBC, CNN, America's Most Wanted and Eurovision.

Ms. Lopez is also a National Volunteer Partner for Girl Scouts USA and has served on the national board of YWCA USA, one of the oldest and largest women's organizations in the nation.

Communication

Students can reach the instructor via email during business hours. When emailing the instructor, please write **PSPR 6202** in the subject line and use only lesleyjlopez@gmail.com. Additionally, the instructor will be available before class each week to address any pending questions or concerns.

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site each week for reading and information about assignments, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between instructors and 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 <https://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 your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at <https://disabilitysupport.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 on Carlyle Street 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 it is your responsibility to notify the instructor IN ADVANCE and make sure any assignments due that week reach the instructor on time to receive full credit. It is also the student’s responsibility to get lecture notes from a classmate and complete the readings as assigned. Regardless of the reason for missing a class, you will not be able to make up missed class participation points.

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 | 703-29- 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 Overview

In this course, we will examine the fundamentals of writing as the necessary foundation for professional communications. The course comprises two thematic sections: developing writing skills and public relations applications for writing. Through challenging assignments, grammar exercises and rigorous practice, this course supports the student's achievement of program goals 1 and 2 (see above list) in particular.

Course Learning Objectives

-Strengthening the writing process: developing skills for brainstorming, organizing structure, drafting, editing and revising.

-Cultivating language skills for more effective expression: understanding of grammar, building skills for persuasive writing and mastering techniques.

Course Requirements

- Formatting matters. All work for this class should be typed, have 1" margins and use 12-point Times-Roman font, single-spaced. All press releases, speeches and op-eds must be formatted to fit the medium.
- Punctuality matters. Each class will begin promptly with a short writing exercise that counts toward the participation grade. Being late is disruptive to the classroom environment.
- When turning in work via email, please put include **PSPR 6202** in the subject line.
- Students must use Associated Press style.
- Printed work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Late work will be marked down a grade for each class it is late. If a student will miss class, emailing an assignment is acceptable.
- Neatness, punctuation, and grammar count as a significant part of your grade. Any assignment with more than four grammatical errors will be returned with a failing grade. After the midterm, any assignment with more than two grammatical errors will be returned to the student without a grade.
- When a guest speaker visits, students will turn in a one-page essay about the speaker at the beginning of the following class. This is in lieu of in class writing.

- Each week, students will participate in a discussion topic on Blackboard. New topics will be posted after class each Wednesday night. To receive participation credit for the week, students must comment before the following class.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Due Date	Weight
Weekly Assignments	On Going	35%
In Class and Online Participation	On Going	25%
Midterm Project	Oct. 12	15%
Final Project	Dec. 7	25%
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 may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

Required Text and Learning Materials

Public Relations Writing: The Essentials of Style and Format by Thomas H. Bivins, either 7th or 8th edition

The Political Speechwriter's Companion: A Guide for Writers and Speakers by Robert Lehrman

Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear by Frank Luntz

The Elements of Style (4th Edition) by William Strunk, E. B. White and Roger Angell

Additional grammar: The Classic Guide to Better Writing: Step-by-Step Techniques and Exercises to Write Simply, Clearly and Correctly by Rudolph Flesch and A.H. Lass

I will distribute additional handout materials, including articles, blogs, essays and research studies, in class and Blackboard on an ad hoc basis.

Tentative Course Calendar*

*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.

Aug. 31

Week 1: Intros

Skills Assessment

Sept. 7

Week 2: Grammar Review I/Editing

Reading: Bivins, Chapter 1

Strunk and White, Chapter 1, 5

Advanced Refresher: Flesch and Lass, Chapters 16-19

Assignment due: Bring in samples of your work to be edited by peers

In class: Best practices and editing exercises

Sept. 14

Week 3: Grammar Review II/ Understanding Messenger and Message

Reading: Bivins, Chapter 2, 4

Strunk and White, Chapter 2-4

Advanced Refresher: Flesch and Lass, Chapters 7, 8 19-29

In class: "The \$20 Ask"

Sept. 21

Week 4: Being a professional writer

Reading: Bivins, Chapter 5

Assignment due: Write a news article comprising 300-400 words.

In class: Guest speakers

Sept. 28

Week 5: Press Releases

Bivins, Chapter 6

Assignment due: Use a press release to write a news article.
In class: Press release prompts

Oct. 5

Week 6: More Press Releases

Reading: Posted on Blackboard

Assignment due: Bring in three examples of press releases and write a one-page summary of what makes them effective or weak and your own guide on “how to write a press release.”

In class: “Power Hour”

Oct. 12

Week 7: Midterm Project Due

Assignment will be announced at noon. Work must be submitted via email by midnight.

Oct. 19

Week 8: Egos, Pathos, Logos

Reading: Lehrman, Chapter 2

Luntz, Chapter 11

Assignment due: Bring in three op-eds and write a one-page assessment of each based on the readings.

In class: Diagramming EPL to different audiences

Oct. 26

Week 9: Op-eds

Reading: Posted on Blackboard

Assignment Due: Write an op-ed on the subject of your choice (700-1000 words).

In class: Guest speaker

Nov. 2

Week 10: Speeches I

Reading: Bivins, Chapter 10

Lehrman, Chapter

Luntz, Chapter 1

Assignment Due: Turn your op-ed into a 5-minute speech

In class: Analysis of recognizable speeches and types of speeches

Nov. 9

Week 11: Speeches II/Monroe’s Motivational Sequence (MMS)

Lehrman, Chapter 5, 7

Advanced Reading: Lehrman, Chapters 6-9, 11-14

Assignment due: Submit final project pitch

In class: Diagramming and presenting MMS speeches

Nov. 16

Week 12: Communications Plan

Reading: Posted on Blackboard

In class: Case studies and prompts

Assignment Due: Edit and rewrite speech to last 10 minutes.

No class on Nov. 23

Nov. 30

Week 13: Wrap up

Guest speaker or first round of final presentations

Dec.7

Week 14: Final Project and Presentations Due

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.