M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations
Spring Semester 2016

CPS 300
3 credits

Location:
Alexandria Graduate Education Center

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor:
Lawrence J. Parnell (MBA)
Associate Professor and Program Director
George Washington University
Masters in Strategic Public Relations

Mr. Parnell is an Associate Professor and Director of the George Washington University Master’s in Strategic Public Relations program in Washington, DC.

Previously, over a 36-year career in the private and public sector, he has held senior communications positions in consulting, on the client side and in politics. He has been at GW in his present capacity since August 2008.

Honors:
While at E&Y he was named PR Professional of the Year (2003) by PR Week. In December 2009, he was named to the PR News Hall of Fame. In March 2015, the GW Masters in Strategic Public Relations was named the Best PR Education program for the year by PR Week.

Contact Information
Phone Number: (703) 299-4150 (0)
Email Address: lparnell@gwu.edu
**Communication/Access**  
Professor Parnell is available for 2 hours prior to class for appointment or via drop in visits at the AGEC for advice on course selection, career planning and course work. Telephone appointments/updates are available on a mutually convenient basis.

**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://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html.

**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 at the stairway at entrance on the second floor of AGEC 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 weather policy and operating status: http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/.

**Attendance Policy**  
The Capstone class is a self-directed course and meets approximately 4-5 times in the semester – usually the second week; mid-semester and the last two weeks of class – culminating in a final, summary presentation of each student’s Capstone project. Attendance at these sessions is mandatory in order to get full credit for class participation.
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 complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting any/all of the following:

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

Program Objectives
Upon the completion of the Masters in SPR, students will have obtained an enhanced understanding and advanced 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
Course overview:
This course represents the culmination of your studies in the Masters in Strategic Public Relations (SPR) program at The George Washington University (GWU). This is a self-directed course with only a few class meetings.

During this course, you are expected to select a recent major PR case or crisis in the news and prepare an in-depth case study—detailing the background of the case, the communications strategy undertaken to manage it and the resolution of the situation—positive or negative—by the company or organization. In the review and analysis of the case, students are required to explore the communications theory which appears to have been deployed in the case and assess the success or failure of the strategy. Students are also encouraged to assess the situation going forward and suggest “next steps” to sustain the progress made and/or recover from the damage the crisis caused to the organization. Samples of previous outstanding papers will be posted on Black Board.

In preparing the case, students are expected to demonstrate critical thinking; research and analysis skills; an understanding of issues and crisis management and a grasp of strategic communications planning and execution. Students must also demonstrate advanced writing skills and an understanding of communications theory and how it is applied and reflected in advanced communications planning.

Alternatively, and only with the prior approval of the Program Director, students may select a topic or issue of strong personal and career interest and develop a comprehensive strategic communications program to address it.

Both options must be comprehensive, ready for implementation (“client ready”) or publication and reflect the bulk of your course work in the SPR program to date. At the end of the semester, the project is to be presented in a brief summary to your colleagues in the class. During the semester, you will work with a peer in the class to refine and enhance your project.
Paper Details:

The paper should be between 25-30 pages – not including the appendix or bibliography pages - and be double- spaced, using 12-point type. Students will be expected to adhere to AP style (Associated Press) in quotes and titles and APA format for citations/footnotes. Papers that do not adhere to these guidelines will be graded accordingly.

All sources, including materials from online resources, should be noted and credited to the proper source. Quotes should be attributed to the speaker as well as note the publication source – unless it is directly from an in person interview the student actually conducted. Proper use of grammar and sentence structure will be monitored and graded accordingly.

RUBRIC:

The paper will be graded on a 100-point scale (see chart in pages that follow) on the following basis:

10 points - Grammar, writing quality and structure of the paper

15 points – Demonstrated knowledge and application of communications theory

25 points - Research depth and quality – both primary and secondary – displayed in the paper.

20 points – Demonstrated application of prior course work in the SPR program and at the GSPM

30 points – Critical thinking and analysis of the case and/or strategic communications plan
Course Learning Objectives
Through the research and preparation of a comprehensive, strategic communications plan or in preparing a case study, the student will demonstrate their grasp of the fundamentals of strategic planning, advanced communications theory and tactical communications in a real world situation. In so doing, the student will meet the following objectives:
1. Apply strategic planning in a communications plan or case study
2. Demonstrate familiarity with the use of state of the art public relations strategies and tactics to achieve an organizational objective.
3. Design measurement strategies and a budget framework to demonstrate progress and ROI of communications activity
4. Prepare a professional grade case study or communications plan

Course Requirements

Capstone students are required to participate in all the classes; Black Board exercises as assigned, meet all deadlines (e.g. for the project proposal, outline, final draft and final project) on time and in accordance with course standards. In addition, students are expected to meet periodically with the instructor to gauge their progress and receive suggestions and ideas to complete the assignment.

Evaluation and Grading

Your final paper will be graded on the basis of the depth of the research, the application of strategic public relations concepts (reflecting the course work completed during the program) and the proper use of grammar, sentence structure and advanced writing techniques displayed in the paper.

Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade*</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72 (lowest grade to pass)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).
Required Text and Learning Materials


Reading:

Phase 1 – *Research* – pages 21-41

Phase 2 – *Strategy* – pages 95-113

Phase 3 – *Communications Tactics* – pages 227-288

Phase 4 – *Evaluation* – pages 331-359


- Reading: Chapter 6, "Theoretical Underpinnings of PR" *(Students should have this text from PSPR 6201)*


Chapters 1, 7, 10, 11 and Chapter 12 – *What Should a Communicator Do?* – *especially important.*

Other Resources:

Guide on Citations: [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)

Guide on AP style: [https://www.apstylebook.com/](https://www.apstylebook.com/)
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