M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations
Summer Semester 2015
May 19 to July 28

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 (not the GW address). You’ll send 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. Also, I check my gmail address frequently (and the GWU address much less often), so 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, 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.

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 it is your responsibility to notify the instructor and make sure any assignments due that week reach the instructor 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.

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
**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 marketing 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. In addition, one assignment (in multiple parts) will be conducted on an online discussion board, with students expected to post links, written summaries and responses to other student posts. All work in this class should be typed, using the Times New Roman, 12 point type and double-spaced. Late work will receive a reduced grade, and if it’s more than one week late (unless 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 the assignment grading. Work is to be submitted electronically and will be returned with instructor’s feedback. Grades will be posted on Blackboard.

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

Evaluation and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Learning Objective(s) Addressed</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team project 1 and 2</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>Project 1: June 9</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Project 2: July 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online assignments</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 7</td>
<td>Part 1: June 16</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 2: June 16 or 23</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 3: July 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>June 23, July 7 and July 21</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam (essay)</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>July 28</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>Entire semester</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade*</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 94-100</td>
<td>Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A- 90-93</td>
<td>Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+ 87-89</td>
<td>Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 83-86</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- 80-82</td>
<td>You’ve completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+ 77-79</td>
<td>Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C 73-76</td>
<td>Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C- 70-72 (lowest grade to pass)</td>
<td>Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Below 70</td>
<td>Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.</td>
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</tbody>
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*Please note that you will be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

**Required Text and Learning Materials**
Finance for Non-Financial Managers SECOND EDITION  (author: Gene Siciliano)
McGraw-Hill: copyright 2015

**Note:** If you don’t have a copy of the APA style guide, you should get a copy. It is:

**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.
Class Date
Week 1 – May 19

Topic and Content Covered: Class introduction
• Overview and learning objectives
• Personal finance overview
• 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): Chapter 1 and 2 of the textbook

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

Assignment starting today:
• Team project #1: Business challenge: analysis and recommendations, presentation to the board. Team presentations will be made during class on June 9.

Class Date
Week 2 – May 26

Topic and Content Covered: Financial reporting overview
• Chapter 1 and 2 highlights
• In-class discussion: Annual reports (Form 10-K)
• Other reports: proxy and prospectus
• Impact of regulation: Sarbanes Oxley and Reg FD

Learned Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 3

Reading Due Today: Chapters 1 and 2

Reading Assigned Today (due next week): Chapter 3 and Buffett article

Assignment Due Today: Set up Google alert

Class Date
Week 3 – June 2

Topic and Content Covered: Financial statements (part 2)
• The leader’s role in financial communication
• CSR reports
• Video reports
• Chapter 3 highlights/balance sheet
Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapter 3, Warren Buffett article

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 4 and 5

Assignment Due Next Week:
• Team project #1: presentations in class

Class Date
Week 4 – June 9

Topic and Content Covered: Leadership and business challenges; corporate reputation
• Team presentations (project #1)
• Chapter 4 and 5 highlights/income statement and cash versus profit difference
• Fixed and variable costs; variance analysis

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 4, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapter 4 and 5

Assignment Due Today:
• Team project/presentation

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 6 and 7

Assignment Due Next Week:
• Online assignment part 1: Assessment and link to annual report posted on Blackboard Discussion section

Class Date
Week 5 – June 16

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

Important: This is an online assignment in lieu of an in-person class

Note: Your initial post for the online assignment, part 1, is due by the start of today’s class. I’d like you to use the class time to complete part 2 of the online assignment, which relates to reading and commenting on other student posts. Please complete part 2 by the end of our official class time (9:40), if possible. However, if you are unable to do so, the final due date for part 2 is by the start of class next week.

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4
Reading Due Today: Chapter 6 and 7

Assignment Due Today:
- Part 1 of online assignment (by the start of class) and preferably part 2 of the online assignment (by the end of the class time)
- Part 2 of the online assignment: Select three student annual report links/assessments and post a response to all three on Blackboard Discussion section.

Assignments Due Next Week:
- Quiz #1: Chapters 3, 4, 5
- Online assignment part 2: If you aren’t able to complete this by 9:40 p.m. on June 16.

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 9 (pages 135-144) and 12, plus Ezra Klein article

Class Date
Week 6 – June 23

Topic and Content Covered: Business success (and failure) factors; the impact of the economy
- Chapter 6, 7, 9 and 12 highlights: cash flow, KPIs, budgeting and ROI
- Introduction: team project #2

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

Reading Due Today: Chapter 9 (pages 135-144) and 12, plus Ezra Klein article

Assignments Due Today:
- Quiz #1
- Online assignment part 2 (if you hadn’t completed it last week)

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 10 and 11, plus communication planning article

Assignment Due Next Week:
- Research our guest speaker for next week and prepare one question to ask him during his Q&A; you do not need to submit this/turn it in; just bring it to class.

Assignment Starting Today: Team project #2: Communication plan, budget, ROI and presentation to management. The presentations will be given during class on July 14.

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
- Guest speaker: Mark Kennedy, director, George Washington University School of Political Management, former Congressman and business executive
• Chapter 10 and 11 highlights: strategic and business planning

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

Reading Due Today: Chapter 10 and 11, plus communication planning article

Assignment Due Today:
• Mark Kennedy question

Assignments Due Next Week
• Online assignment part 3. This will relate to the same company you selected for parts 1 and 2, and will involve its most recent quarterly financial/earnings and the corresponding investor conference call.
• Quiz #2: Chapters 6, 7, 9 (pages 135-144), and 12

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 13

Class Date
Week 8 – July 7

Topic and Content Covered: Communicating with investors and market valuation criteria
• Guest speaker: Miranda Weeks, manager of investor relations, Verisign
• Chapter highlights: financing the business

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

Reading Due Today: Chapter 13

Assignments Due Today:
• Online assignment part 3
• Quiz #2

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 14, SBA link, and PR agency article

Assignment Due Next Week: Question for July 21 guest speaker (will be shared with him in advance)

Assignment Starting Today
• Final exam (essay exam) will be posted today. Due by 7:10 p.m. on Tuesday, July 28

Class Date
Week 9 – July 14

Topic and Content Covered: Building a successful business and raising capital
• Team project 2 presentations
• Chapter highlights: attracting outside investors
• Perspectives of an entrepreneur

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

Reading Due Today: Chapter 14, SBA link, and PR agency article

Assignments Due Today:
• Question for July 21 guest speaker

Reading Assigned Today: Ford/Mulally article

Assignment Due Next Week:
• Quiz #3: Chapters 10, 11, 13 and 14

Class Date
Week 10 – July 21

Topic and Content Covered: PR agency opportunities and challenges: financing, growth, client retention, fee determination, dealing with economic challenges
• Guest speaker: Steve Cody, CEO of Peppercomm
• Business leadership case: Ford/Mulally
• Financial statement recap
• Business and finance “Jeopardy”

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

Reading Due Today: Ford/Mulally article

Assignment Due Today:
• Quiz #3

Reading Assigned Today: None

FINAL EXAM
• Due by 7:10 p.m. on Tuesday, July 28

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.