M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations
Summer Semester 2017
May 23 to July 25

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 (kvahouny@gmail.com), as opposed to the GW address). You’ll see 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, you are responsible for notifying me and for making sure any assignments due that week are sent to me 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
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 communication 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. There are also graded online discussions, with students expected to post links, written summaries, and responses to other student posts. The final exam should use Times New Roman, 12 point type, and it should be double-spaced. It is extremely important for assignments to be 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 explained the reason for needing 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, 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 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</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>Project 1: June 20</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team project 2</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7</td>
<td>Project 2: July 25 (in class)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online assignment 1</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 7</td>
<td>Part 1: June 6</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 2: June 13</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online assignment 2</td>
<td>1, 2, 4</td>
<td>Part 1: June 27</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part 2: July 11</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quizzes  |  1-7  |  June 13  
|       |       | July 11   
|       |       | July 25   
|       |       | 15% (5% each)  
Final exam (essay)  |  1-7  |  July 27  
|       |       | 20%  
Attendance and participation  |  1-7  |  Entire semester  
|       |       | 20%  
Total  |       | 100%  

**Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade*</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
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</thead>
<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>
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<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 will be penalized for the late submission of assignments.

**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.

**Schedule Details**

**Class Date**
**Week 1 – May 23**

Topic and Content Covered: Class introduction
- Class overview and learning objectives
- 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. Team presentations will be made during class on June 20.

**Class Date**
**Week 2 – May 30**

Topic and Content Covered: Financial reporting overview
- Chapter 1 and 2 highlights
- Personal finance overview
- In-class discussion: Annual reports
- Other reports: proxy and prospectus
- Impact of regulation: Sarbanes Oxley and Reg FD

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 3

Reading Due Today: Chapters 1 and 2
Reading Assigned Today (due next week): Chapter 3 and Warren Buffett article

Assignment Due Today: Set up Google alert

Assignment Due Next Week: Online assignment #1, part 1 (will be on Blackboard Discussions)

Class Date
Week 3 – June 6

Topic and Content Covered: Financial statements (part 2)
- The leader’s role in financial communication
- CSR reports
- Video reports
- Chapter 3 highlights

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapter 3, Warren Buffett article

Reading Assigned Today (due next week): Chapters 4 and 5, Ford/Mulally article

Assignment Due Today: Online assignment #1, part 1

Assignments Due Next Week:
- Online assignment #1, part 2 (responses on Discussion board to three student posts)
- Quiz #1: This will cover chapters 1 to 5 and assigned articles (will be on Blackboard Tests section)
- Bring an article to class from a business periodical that relates to any of the concepts in the chapters we’ve read so far; this will be used in an in-class team discussion.

Class Date
Week 4 – June 13

Topic and Content Covered: Financial communication tools and the opportunity for integrated messages
- Chapter 4 and 5 highlights
- Overview: financial communication options and opportunities
- Ford case study
- Fixed and variable costs/variance analysis
- Team discussion: your business article and its relationship to textbook chapter

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4

Reading Due Today: Chapter 4 and 5, Ford/Mulally article

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 6 and 7
Assignments Due Today:
- Article for class discussion
- Online assignment #1, part 2 (three responses)
- Quiz #1 (chapters 1-5)

Prior Assignment Due Next Week: Team project #1: Presentations

Class Date
Week 5 – June 20

Topic and Content Covered: Leadership and business challenges; corporate reputation
- Team presentations (project #1)
- Chapter 6 and 7 highlights
- Income statement versus cash flow highlights
- In-class exercise: Key performance indicators

Learning Objectives Addressed: 1, 2, 4, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapter 6 and 7

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

Assignment Due Today:
- Team project #1: Presentations in class

Assignments Due Next Week:
- Online assignment #2, part 1 (Discussion board)
- Listen to the most recent quarterly financial results (“earnings”) conference call for the company you selected for your online discussion. We’ll be discussing this in class.

Class Date
Week 6 – June 27

Topic and Content Covered: Business success (and failure) factors; the impact of the economy; investor relations
- Guest speaker: investor relations
- Chapter 9 and 12 highlights: return on investment and budgeting
- In-class investor conference call discussion

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

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

Assignments Due Today:
- Online assignment #2, part 1
- Listen to quarterly conference call and be prepared to discuss
Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 10 plus PR agency article

Assignments Due Next Week (July 11, not July 4!)
- Online assignment #2, part 2 (three responses)
- Quiz 2: chapters 6, 7, 9 (pages 135-144), 10
- Prepare a question for our guest speaker

Class Date
Week 7 – July 4: Holiday (no class)

Class Date
Week 8 – July 11

Topic and Content Covered: The business of the business; why PR/communications professionals need to be well-versed in business and finance
- Guest speaker
- Chapter 10 highlights and agency KPIs

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

Reading Due Today: Chapter 10, plus PR agency article

Assignments Due Today:
- Online assignment #2, part 2 (three responses)
- Quiz 2: chapters 6, 7, 9 (pages 135-144) and 10
- Prepared question for guest speaker

Reading Assigned Today: Chapter 11 and 12 and communication planning article

Class Date
Week 9 – July 18

Topic and Content Covered: Business planning
- Chapter 11 and 12 highlights
- In-class planning and budgeting exercise

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

Reading Due Today: Chapters 11 and 12 and communication planning article

Reading Assigned Today: Chapters 13 and 14, SBA link

Assignment Due Next Week:
- Quiz 3: chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14

Assignment Starting Today
Final exam (essay exam) will be posted today. Due by 12 midnight on Thursday, July 27

Class Date
Week 10 – July 25

Topic and Content Covered: Building a successful business and raising capital
- Perspectives of an entrepreneur
- Team project 2 (in class)
- Chapter highlights: chapters 13 and 14
- Course recap and “game”

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

Reading Due Today: Chapters 13 and 14, SBA link

Assignment Due Today:
- Quiz 3: chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14

FINAL EXAM
- Due by midnight on Thursday, July 27

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.