

BGS 373 STRATEGIC CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Instructor: Jeffery R. Patterson, Ph.D./ jefferypatterson@utexas.edu

Date: T TH 9:30 am to 11:00 am **Classroom** CBA 5.330

Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

The capacity of modern corporations to develop and communicate integrated messaging strategies is essential in a world of non-stop information and split-second decisionmaking. Corporations can no longer constrain themselves to market factors, but have become essential social and political actors on the world stage. Executives must possess sophisticated understanding and skill to manage “nonmarket” arenas to inform, motivate, and persuade various clients, markets, and constituencies within the global public sphere and social/political networks.

Strategic communication positions firms to a competitive advantage in business/industrial sectors, in capital markets, and legislative and governmental regulatory environments. As such, corporate communication has many different uses and roles, whether it is a tool of organizational management (to inform, engage, listen, and lead individuals within an organization); to attract clients; to encourage investors, or to influence legislative or regulatory environments. The old saying “Knowledge is Power” is only half right; Knowledge is useless if it is not deployed and communicated clearly and effectively.

This class will survey different arenas and practices of corporate communication—not only in the world of business, but also the effect on all of global society—to motivate, persuade and inform its various constituencies (i.e., investors, employees, governments, consumers, and clients). The course encompasses basic precepts of public affairs, investor relations, community engagement, and governmental relations to integrate the insights of practicing corporate communication professionals with the concepts and academic approaches of communication theory. Ultimately, students will have a broad understanding of the different roles and functions involved in strategic corporate communications within contemporary global society.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Media Writing Project (25 percent of class grade)

Students will participate in a media writing exercise that will provide students the practical experience of visualizing, framing, and writing a public communications product (i.e., press release, speech, marketing materials, etc.). Projects will be no longer than 3-4 pages, 1.5-spaced, 11-point Times New Roman. **The assignment is due Friday, October 7.**

Strategic Planning Project (25 percent of class grade)

Students will undertake a critical analysis of a unique strategic issue or objective discussed in class. The Strategic Communication Planning Project will be a 10-12 page (1.5 spaced, 10 point, Times New Roman) paper that provides an opportunity to address some of the unique strategic issues and objectives discussed in class. The goal is to develop the appropriate format and criteria for successful strategic communication. Each student will research the goals and/or needs of a *particular corporation or industry* of his/her choice and then propose an integrated communications and/or legislative strategy to achieve those goals/needs. Students are cautioned to focus on a scenario that provides for succinct, but detailed, analysis. The project itself should show original thinking--along with appropriate research and examples--to develop appropriate communication strategies, identify potential partners, develop key messages, anticipate stakeholder reaction, and consider methods for outcomes evaluation. **Students will be required to submit a prospectus on October 28** that provides a concise overview of the topic, describes the corporation's/industry's unique circumstances, and the main frameworks to address the issues involved. The Instructor will provide feedback on the prospectus and help

conceptualize the project. Three days (**November 8, 10, and 22**) have been set aside for consultation on the projects. **The final project is due by 11:50 pm, Friday, December 2.** The project will be discussed in more detail in class.

Mid-Term Exam (25 percent of grade)

The midterm exam will consist of a series of multiple choice, short answer questions, and a short essay covering the lectures up to that date.

Final Exam (25 percent of grade)

The final exam will consist of a series of multiple choice, short answer questions, and a short essay covering the lectures up to that date.

COURSE TEXTS/READINGS

This course will not rely upon a pre-determined text, but will use a combination of academic articles, book chapters, and professional materials that are accessible to all students. The materials will be distributed through Canvas and via email throughout the classes. If students are having trouble accessing the materials, please notify me.

CLASS DISCUSSION

A big part of this class will involve classroom discussion. As such, I will be employing the McCombs School rules about not using laptops or personal electronic devices in class. I am generally not in favor of having to invoke the policy, but find that it does encourage students to remain involved in the discussion.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers.

DOCUMENTED DISABILITY STATEMENT

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty is not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

August 25: Introduction and Overview of Course

August 30: Strategic Communications Imperative

Readings:

Argenti, Paul A., Robert Howell, and Karen A. Beck, *The Strategic Communications Imperative*, MIT Sloan Management Review, https://www.dartmouth.edu/~opa/communicators/fall08/reading/Sloan_MIT_Strat_Comm_Imp.pdf

September 1: Corporate Communications/Structures and History

Readings:

Cornelissen, Joep, "Chapter 1 and 2, Defining Corporate Communication," in *Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice*, (Los Angeles: Sage Publishing) 2008.

September 6: Organizational Imperatives and Objectives

Readings:

Smith, Ronald, "Analyzing the Organization," *Strategic Planning for Public Relations*, Routledge Press, 2012

Smith, Ronald, "Establishing Goals and Objectives," *Strategic Planning for Public Relations*, Routledge Press, 2012

September 8: Theories of Strategic Communication

Readings:

Straubhaar, Joseph, and LaRose, Robert, *Media Now: Communications Media in the Information Age* (3rd Edition), (Connecticut: Wadsworth Publishing) 2010, pp. 324-68.

September 13: Corporate Identity, Image, and Branding

Readings:

Balmer, John M.T. and Stephen A. Greyser, "Corporate marketing: Integrating Corporate Identity, Corporate Branding, Corporate Communications, Corporate Image and Corporate Reputation," *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 No. 7/8, 2006

September 15: Social Media and Networking

Readings:

Ang, Lawrence, "Community Relationship Management and Social Media," *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management* (2011) v. 18, pp. 31-38.

September 20: Guest Speaker on Social Media

September 22: Corporate Social Responsibility

Readings:

Chandler, David, and William Wether, Jr., "Chapter One: What is CSR?" in *Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility*, 3rd Edition, 2014, pp. 3-36

Corporate Social Responsibility, *Encyclopedia for Business* (2nd ed.) 2014

<http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/Comp-De/Corporate-Social-Responsibility.html>

September 27: Messages and Messaging Strategies /Persuasion, Influence, and Argument

We will discuss the process of persuasive writing, in anticipation of your writing a press release, speech, or marketing piece (3-4 pages) that will simulate a new product roll-out, a change in corporate strategy, or new programmatic initiative, etc. **You will want to write on a topic on which you are moderately well versed, since you will be judged on how well you understand/communicate the issues involved.**

Readings:

Orwell, George, "Politics and the English Language"

"How to Write a Press Release," *Wiki-How*,
<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Press-Release>

September 29: Ethical Issues

Readings:

Bowen, Shannon A., "Ethics and Public Relations," *Institute for Public Relations*, October 30, 2007

Shum, Paul K., and Sharon L. Yam, "Ethics and Law: Guiding the Invisible Hand to Correct Corporate Social Responsibility Externalities," *Journal of Business Ethics* (2011) 98:549–571

October 4: Audiences / Stakeholder Relations

Readings:

Smith, Ronald, "Analyzing Publics," *Strategic Planning for Public Relations*, Routledge Press, 2012

October 6: Mid-Term Review

This class will be dedicated to a review of the first half of the semester lectures, readings, and discussions in preparation of the mid-term exam.

***** **WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE 11:59 p.m. Friday, October 7*******

October 11: * * * MID-TERM EXAM * * *

October 13: News Media Relations

Readings:

Baron, David, "Chapter Three: The News Media and Nonmarket Issues," *Business and Its Environments*, Seventh Edition, (New York, NY: Pearson Education International), 52-69

October 18: Media Relations/ Crisis Management

Readings:

Coombs, W. Timothy, *Crisis Management and Communications*, Institute for Public Relations, 2007

www.instituteforpr.org/topics/crisis-management-and-communications/

October 20: Media Relations/Crisis Management

Case Studies:

Four case studies will be distributed before class on crisis management. Students will be assigned lead a discussion of the circumstances and responses in each.

October 25: Human Resources/Employee Relations Communication

Readings:

Berger, Bruce K, *Employee/Organizational Communications*, Institute of Public Relations, 2008

<http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/employee-organizational-communications/>

October 27: Wall Street/Investor Relations

Readings:

Laskin, Alexander V., (2011) "How Investor Relations Contributes to the Corporate Bottom Line," *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 23:3, pp. 302-324.

***** STRATEGIC PROPOSAL PROJECT PROSPECTUS DUE Friday, October 28 *****

A one-two paragraph description of the topic that your final project will be about, the format you are taking (media plan, stakeholder outreach, congressional lobbying plan, etc.) and what outcomes you hope to achieve. The prospectus should be emailed to me no later than 11:59 p.m. on October 30.

November 1: Guest Speaker/ Investor Relations

November 3: Public Sphere/Issues Management

Readings:

Baron, David, "Public Politics and Nonmarket Strategy, Chapter Six: Nonmarket Analysis for Business and Chapter Seven: Nonmarket Strategies for Government Arenas," *Business and Its Environments*, (New York, NY: Pearson Education International), 1996

Dougal, Elizabeth, "Issues Management," *Institute for Public Relations*, December 12, 2008 <http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/issues-management/>

November 8: Public Sphere/Issues Management/Case Studies

Case Studies:

Four case studies will be distributed before class to that look at issues management. Students will be assigned to analyze the studies and lead a thoughtful discussion of the circumstances and responses in each.

November 10: INDIVIDUAL PROJECT CONSULTATIONS

Schedule Class time for 5-8 minute individual discussions about Final Student Project.

November 15: Governmental Relations

Readings:

Drutman, Lee, (2014) "The Business of America is Lobbying: Explaining the Growth of Corporate Political Activity in Washington, D.C." *Academia.edu*
https://www.academia.edu/2410950/The_Business_Of_America_is_Lobbying_Explaining_the_Growth_of_Corporate_Political_Activity_in_Washington_DC

November 17: Political Activity and Influence

Readings:

Lux, Sean, T. Russell Crook, and David J. Woehr, "Mixing Business With Politics: A Meta-Analysis of the Antecedents and Outcomes of Corporate Political Activity," *Journal of Management* Vol. 37 No. 1, January 2011 pp. 223-247

November 22: INDIVIDUAL PROJECT CONSULTATIONS

We will schedule time during class to have 5-8 minute individual discussions about the Student Project Final in anticipation of your presentations and final project.

November 24: Thanksgiving Holiday (NO CLASS)

November 29: Guest Speaker/ Governmental Relations and Lobbying

December 1: Final Exam Review

December 8: * FINAL EXAM 2:00-5:00 pm *****