BGS 373 STRATEGIC CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

Instructor: Jeffery R. Patterson, Ph.D. / jefferypatterson@utexas.edu
Date: T TH 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm Classroom UTC 1.104
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 November 6 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. Two days (November 24 and December 1) have been set aside for consultation on the projects. The final project is due by 11:50 pm, Friday, December 4. 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.

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 27: Introduction and Overview of Course

September 1: Strategic Communications Imperative

Readings:

September 3: Corporate Communications/Structures and History

Readings:

September 8: Organizational Imperatives and Objectives

Readings:

September 10: Theories of Strategic Communication

Readings:

September 15: Corporate Identity, Image, and Branding

Readings:

September 17: Corporate Social Responsibility

Readings:

September 22: 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:


September 24: Tactics and Campaigns
Readings:


September 29: Audiences
Readings:

October 1: Media Relations
Readings:


October 6: Media Relations/ Crisis Management
Readings:

Links and Resources:
Crisis Communication Plan: A PR Blue Print http://www3.niu.edu/newsplace/crisis.html


********** ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE 11:59 p.m. October 7**********
October 8: Media Relations/Guest Speaker
Susan E. Binford is Assistant Dean for Communications and Outreach, the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at UT-Austin. Her media career spans broadcast and cable television, corporate communications, sports, and music. Binford was senior vice president of corporate communications for the Disney-ABC Television Group in Los Angeles. She earlier led public relations efforts for CNN Worldwide and Turner Broadcasting System Inc., was vice president of corporate and media relations for NBC Entertainment, West Coast; and directed MTV's publicity efforts from its launch.

October 13: Social Media and Networking
Readings:


Links and Resources:
Jeff Boothby, Francesca, “Social Media Best Practice Guide”
http://usefulsocialmedia.com/assets/pdf/USMBriefing.pdf

October 15: 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.

October 20: Guest Speaker/ Andy Sernovitz, Social Media Marketing
Andy Sernovitz is the New York Times bestselling author of Word of Mouth Marketing: How Smart Companies Get People Talking. He leads SocialMedia.org, the community for social media leaders at the world’s greatest brands. Andy has taught at Northwestern University and the Wharton School of Business, ran a business incubator, and started half a dozen companies. He created the Word of Mouth Marketing Association and the Association for Interactive Marketing.

October 22: ** MID-TERM EXAM **

October 27: Corporate Community Relations
Readings:


October 29: Stakeholder Relations
Readings:

STRATEGIC PROPOSAL PROJECT PROSPECTUS DUE October 30

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 3: 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/

November 5: Wall Street/Investor Relations

Readings:

November 10: Guest Speaker/ Investor Relations

November 12: Public Sphere/Issues Management

Readings:


November 17: Governmental Relations/Political Activity

Readings:

Links and Resources:
www.fec.gov/pdf/colagui.pdf [PDF]

November 19: Guest Speaker/ Governmental Relations and Lobbying

November 24: 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 26: Thanksgiving Holiday (NO CLASS)
December 1:  *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.

December 3: Final Exam Review

****** **FINAL PROJECT DUE December 4 ******

December 15:  * **FINAL EXAM 9 AM to NOON  **