

**12/10/08 version**

**The George Washington University – Masters in Strategic Public Relations  
Course: CSR Communication Strategies  
Syllabus – Spring '09**

**Meeting Dates:** Jan 15, 2009 through April 23, 2009

*(NOTE: Spring Break is week of March 16 – 20 No Classes)*

**Class Hours:** 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

**Campus Location:** Foggy Bottom (DC)

Room: TBD @ Rome Hall

**Instructor:**

Larry Parnell, Associate Professor and Program Director

Masters in Strategic Public Relations

The George Washington University

BS Journalism, Boston University

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Office Hours: 6 PM- 7 PM (on class days)

**Course overview:**

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) movement is a worldwide phenomenon and corporations, trade associations and non-profits are being asked to step up and be accountable. Public relations and communications professionals need to develop the skills to prepare strategic communications plans that reflect their organization's commitment to CSR and enhance their employer's reputation in the global marketplace.

This course will examine the global CSR movement, explore the unique communications challenges it presents and offer practical suggestions and tactics to respond to this trend. The class will feature in-class activities, current research and guest speakers from NGOs, communications firms and major corporations with practical advice on meeting this challenge in the global marketplace. We will utilize case studies, professional journals and original research to explore the topic and develop a comprehensive CSR communications strategy as the capstone project for the class.

**Course Goals/Objectives:**

1. **To develop an understanding of the history and development of the CSR movement and its application to strategic public relations.**
2. **To review various tactics and techniques for communicating CSR activities and programs to key stakeholders.**
3. **To enable the student to develop a complete CSR communications strategy for the company, client or organization including a situation analysis, objectives, strategies and tactics as well as a measurement and evaluation component. (Note: Class activities and homework assignments will be designed to review each key element prior to the final project's assignment.)**
4. **To learn from the guest speakers, in class activities and each other to be a more effective CSR communicator.**

**Ethics Statement:** The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor.

**Disability Statement:** If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact: [dss@gwu.edu](mailto:dss@gwu.edu)

**Work:** All work for this class should be typed double-spaced, spell-checked, have one-inch margins, and use 12-point font. Use AP style. Late work will be dropped one grade for each day it is late. If you have extenuating circumstances or need special accommodations please see me before the due date, and I will be happy to accommodate you. Work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date.

**Policy on Class Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. If you need to miss a class it is your responsibility to make sure any assignments that are due reach the instructor on time to receive full credit. It is also the student's responsibility to get lecture notes from a classmate and complete the readings as assigned. Regardless of the reason for missing a class, students will not be able to make up missed participation points.

## **Reading:**

Principal Texts: (*Available on Amazon.com*)

Corporate Social Responsibility: Doing the Most Good for Your Company and Your Cause; Authors: Kotler, Philip and Lee, Nancy. John Wiley & Sons, 2005.  
ISBN 0-471-47611

Harvard Business Review on Corporate Social Responsibility, Harvard Business School Press, 2003. ISBN 978-1-59139-274-3.

Electronic Reserve: Blackboard access to come

Communications Planning – An Integrated Approach, Author: Sherry Deveraux Ferguson. Sage Publications, 1999, ISBN 0-7619-1314-9.  
Chapter 3 “Writing the Strategic Communications Plan (pages 21 – 44) and  
Chapter 5 - “Writing the Communications Support Plan”, (pages 67-87).

Unleashing the Power of PR – A Contrarian’s Guide to Marketing and Communications,  
Author: Mark Weiner. John Wiley & Sons, 2006. ISBN -13 978-0-7879-8279-9.  
Chapter 3 – “Measuring Public Relations Programming” pages 47 – 78 and  
Chapter 4 – “Setting Meaningful and Measurable Public Relations Objectives”,  
Pages 79 - 105

## **Other Materials**

Articles of interest from trade journals and newsletters, new research studies or related news coverage will be distributed to the class for review and discussion.

## **Guest Speakers**

Periodically, we will invite guest speakers from area public relations agencies, corporations and not-for-profit associations. You will be expected to listen, participate and apply the lessons learned in the course.

## **Weekly Assignments:**

Students will be given four (4) written assignments, worth 10 points each; three Quizzes (5 points each) based on the readings and class discussions; a team project worth 15 points and a final project worth 20 points.

First assignment – Prepare a paper (500 words) providing your definition of CSR and detail your personal views on its value to companies, organizations and society.

Second Assignment – Research and prepare a report (500-750 words) on the origins of the CSR movement, its current state and provide your thoughts on where it may evolve to in the future.

Third Assignment – Case Study #1 -Analyze and react to the case study provided by the instructor. Detail the key issues, strategic considerations and response to the issue or opportunity. Also provide your thoughts on if the effort was successful, what the next steps might be and how you would measure your progress, (750-1000 words)

Fourth Assignment – Case study #2 - Analyze and react to the case study provide by the instructor. Detail the key issues, strategic considerations and response to the issue or opportunity. Also provide your thoughts on if the effort was successful, what the next steps might be and how you would measure your progress, (750-1000 words)

Grading Rubric for weekly assignments: These papers will be graded on a 10 point basis: three points for format, grammar, spelling etc; three points for your research and understanding of the topic and four points for your insights and recommendations.

### **Team Project – 15 points**

You will join with a small group of classmates with the goal of researching and preparing a new case study of the CSR activities of a major corporation. You may choose the company as a group, or the instructor will provide you with one to focus on in your report. Either way, the instructor must pre-approve the company to be studied.

You will examine the company's CSR communications outreach efforts to date, evaluate their effectiveness and make your recommendations on next steps and discuss how the company could improve or sustain its performance, (6-8 pages, plus attachments.)

Grading Rubric – Scores will be assessed as follows: two points for overall writing, grammar and presentation, five points for research on the target company's CSR efforts; five points for evaluation and analysis of the company's program and three points for the creativity and strategic value of your recommendations.

Note: You will be graded as a group for this assignment, with allowances for each individual's contributions to the end product. A team leader will be designated by the instructor and he/she will be asked for their candid assessment of each team member's contributions.

### **Final Project – 20 points**

Each of you will develop a comprehensive CSR communications plan for your company, client or organization, utilizing the material covered in class and the readings as your reference and foundation. (Length: 8-10 pages, plus appendix)

In your paper, you should identify the challenge/opportunity and develop a viable action plan to address it. The plan must be complete and thorough, including a situation analysis, action plan – with objectives, strategies and tactics - as well as a measurement and evaluation component.

Grading Rubric: Scores will be assessed as follows: four points for writing, grammar and presentation; six points for research and situation analysis, seven points for the action plan, objectives, strategy and tactics and three points for the measurement and evaluation component.

### **Quizzes - 3 @5 points – Total points 15**

These quizzes will be based on the material covered to date of the quiz and feature 5-6 short answer or multiple-choice questions. They will be administered by the instructor, usually at the beginning of class, timing is at his discretion. If you are absent, quizzes cannot be made up.

## **Class Participation**

Two points will be awarded for each class session where students participate in the class discussion and/or activity and add to the discussion in a meaningful way. NOTE: You cannot make up participation points if you are absent. Note no participation points for awarded for first class (instructor/class overview) and each student's final presentation class.

Grading Rubric: For a point you must make a thoughtful, substantive contribution that refers to the reading or lecture topic and advances the discussion.  
(10 classes @ 1 point each = 10 points).

### **Points Summary:**

- Individual assignments (4) – **40** points (total)
- Group Assignment – **15** points
- Final project – **20** points
- Quiz (3) – **15** points (total)
- Class Participation – 1point per class – **10** (total)

Total points available = 100

(Note: Final grade will reflect the total number of points earned, on a scale of 100 and a corresponding grade will be given. See chart below.

## Course Grading Scale:

### Letter Grades/Points-

- A 96-100
- A- 90-95
- B+ 87-89
- B 83-86
- B- 80-82
- C+ 77-79
- C 73-76
- C- 70-72
- D+ 67-69
- D 63-66
- D- 60-62
- F 59 or below
- I Incomplete\*

(\*I will grant an “I” grade if you fail to complete work due to circumstances I deem legitimate and sufficient, your prior performance has been satisfactory, and you have a plan for completing the work. The “I” will convert to an “F” if you do not submit the missing work by the agreed-upon submission deadline.)

### Grading Standards

- **A:** In a business environment this assignment would distinguish you as a top communications professional in your organization. It represents work that is outstanding in every way; e.g., strong research, smart thinking, appropriate style, syntax, and grammar and demonstrates the strategic use of media relations to achieve a communications objective.
- **B:** In a business environment this work would reflect well on you and your organization. You completed the assignment, fulfilled all requirements, and contributed additional ideas and/or insights but the likely results would be relatively ordinary and not meet your communications objectives. The assignment would be judged as adequate but undistinguished.
- **C:** You completed the assignment and fulfilled the requirements but the work would not achieve all of your media relations/communications objectives without major revisions in logic, target media selection or approach strategy.
- **D:** You fulfilled some of the requirements of the assignment, but not all. This work would need to be completely reworked before it would represent you or your company professionally and achieve any meaningful media relations objectives.
- **F:** You did not submit the assignment.