

Course: PRAD 391 • Section 401 • Fall 2011

## **Digital Public Relations**

Class Times: Tues. & Thurs. 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Classroom: 14 E. Jackson, Room 1128

**Instructor: Dr. Matt Ragas, Ph.D.**

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**Instructor Web page: <http://www.mattragas.com>**

**Office: 14 E. Jackson, Room 1823**

**Office Phone: (312) 362-6003**

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**Office Hours: Tues. 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. or by appt.**

### **Course Description:**

This course is designed to provide students with a conceptual and applied overview of how digital and social media tools/services are transforming the field of public relations at all stages of the public relations campaign/program process from research and planning to implementation and evaluation. Through in-class exercises and discussions, individual assignments, blog posts/critiques of campaigns, and the final team project, students will gain knowledge of how digital and social media tools/services may be used for PR purposes, such as to conduct environmental scanning and inform, persuade, or build dialogic relationships between an organization and its publics. In addition to gaining hands-on experience using free digital and social media tools/services in a PR context, students will complete a final project using Radian6, a premium social media monitoring/engagement platform used by over 2,000 organizations, including nearly half of the *Fortune 100*.

### **Course Objectives:**

- To provide an overview of the emerging practice of digital public relations, including an examination of how and which social media tools and services are being incorporated into PR programs and campaigns;
- To build knowledge and familiarity with a wide range of free social media tools and services, and how they may be applied for public relations purposes to achieve organizational goals and objectives;
- To practice using social media monitoring to inform PR campaigns/programs through monitoring the social media conversations surrounding a brand and its peers using the Radian6 platform;
- To enhance presentation and writing skills in communicating persuasively, clearly, and successfully; and
- To examine the ethical and professional responsibilities that come with practicing digital PR.

### **Required Reading Materials:**

**There is no required textbook for the course.** All required readings each week and assignment sheets will be posted to the course section on Desire 2 Learn (D2L), DePaul's learning management system. Use your Campus Connect username and password to login. D2L login page: <https://d2l.depaul.edu/>

Digital PR news and trends are changing rapidly and it is critical that you are a voracious reader of news on social media campaigns/programs, new tools/services, and new research findings. Two free daily e-mail newsletter round-ups I would highly encourage you to follow are *PR Daily* and *MarketingDaily*. The readings I have assigned in this class will help you, but it's important to go above and beyond if you want to stay on top.

## Initial Remarks on Reading and Writing

Be an active reader of assigned readings and course materials. Using a highlighter is not enough. Read with pen or pencil in hand so that you can write down your thoughts, comments, questions, objections, and criticisms in the margin or on a notepad. It will enhance your understanding of class discussion and your ability to contribute to it. It will also make consulting the readings in class and reviewing them after class much easier.

All written work should conform to normal standards of college-level written communication with correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling, as well as proper documentation when necessary.

## The Writing Center

Consider visiting the Writing Center for help on your writing assignments. You may schedule appointments (30 or 50 minutes) on an as-needed or weekly basis, scheduling up to 3 hours worth of appointments per week. Online services include Feedback-by-Email and IM conferencing. All writing center services are *free*.

Writing Center tutors are specially selected and trained graduate and undergraduate students who can help you at almost any stage of your writing. They will not do your work for you, but they can help you focus and develop your ideas, review your drafts, and polish your writing. They can answer questions about grammar, mechanics, different kinds of writing styles, and documentation formats. They also can answer questions and provide feedback online, through IM/webcam chats and email. Obviously, the tutors won't necessarily be familiar with every class or subject, but they are able to provide valuable help from the perspective of an interested and careful reader as well as a serious and experienced student-writer.

Schedule your appointments with enough time to think about and use the feedback you will receive. Bring your assignment handout and other relevant materials to your appointments.

## **Quick Links & Locations:**

To schedule an appointment at the Center's LPC and Loop locations: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/sched/WCOnline.html>

To schedule real-time conversations with IM and/or webcam: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/sched/im.htm>

To request feedback by Email: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/sched/email.html>

Loop Campus Office: 1620 Lewis Center, 312.362.6726

Lincoln Park Office: 250 McGaw, 773.325.4272

For more information, visit: <http://www.depaul.edu/writing/>

## Academic Honesty

Please take all possible steps to avoid plagiarism and cheating. Plagiarism (literary or artistic theft), copying someone else's work, or other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated. **Any case of academic dishonesty will be considered grounds for an automatic failing grade in the course.** Having someone else do your work for you is also considered academic dishonesty. University guidelines will be followed for any offenses.

Cheating is any action that violates University norms or an instructor's guidelines for the preparation and submission of assignments. Such actions may include using or providing unauthorized assistance or materials on course assignments or possessing unauthorized materials during an examination.

Plagiarism involves the representation of another's work as your own. For example:

- (a) Submitting as one's own any material that is copied from published or unpublished sources such as the Internet, print, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- (b) Paraphrasing another's views, opinions or insights without proper acknowledgement or copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with acknowledgement.
- (c) Submitting as one's own work a report, examination, paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else.

If you are unsure about what constitutes unauthorized help on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution, please ask your instructor.

Please refer to the Student Handbook for more details: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html>

## Inclusiveness

This class encourages the free exchange of ideas. Every attempt is made to make all course materials non-sexist, diverse, and multi-cultural. Should I ever fail to meet this goal, please let me know immediately.

Students are expected to behave professionally and respectfully towards their classmates and the instructors.

## Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation for disabilities should provide me with written documentation from the appropriate university offices regarding the specific disability and accommodation requested during the first week of class. All discussions will remain confidential.

For more information, contact the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) for LD, AD/HD: <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/plus>, (773) 325-1677 or:

The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) for all other disabilities: <http://www.studentaffairs.depaul.edu/studentwithdisabilities>, (773) 325-1677. Offices: Student Center #370.

## Course Evaluation:

The evaluation of the coursework will be based on your performance in five areas, each which constitute a portion of the final grade. These areas include: 1) paper #1 (CNBC “Facebook Obsession”), 2) paper #2 (“Future Trends in Digital PR”), 3) class attendance/participation, 4) post to the DePaulDigitalPR.com class blog a review of a social media campaign and make a short presentation to the class, and 5) Radian6 brand monitoring team presentation aka the final project (includes turning in a copy of your slide deck; uploading your slide deck to the class SlideShare account; and making a team presentation about what you learned about online conversations surrounding your brand and its peer group/top competitors).

1) “The Facebook Obsession” reaction paper (individual)	60 points (15%)
2) “Top Three Trends in Digital PR” paper (individual)	80 points (20%)
3) Class attendance and participation (individual)	60 points (15%)
4) Class blog campaign post/presentation (individual)	80 points (20%)
5) Radian6 brand monitoring project (team)	120 points (30%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>400 possible points</b>

## Course Grading Scale:

A: 93-100%

A-: 90-92%

B+: 87-89%

B: 83-86%

B-: 80-82%

C+: 77-79%

C: 73-76%

C-: 70-72%

D: 60-69%

F: 0-59%

### 1) “The Facebook Obsession” reaction paper (15%)

Near the start of the quarter, you will write a short reaction paper in response to watching the CNBC video, “The Facebook Obsession.” This paper will assess what you think the rise of social media and Facebook mean for society and the future of public relations and communication. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided.

### 2) “Top Three Trends in Digital PR” paper (20%)

Near the end of the quarter, you will write a short reaction paper (plus references) sharing what you believe are the “Top Three Trends in Digital PR” based on what you learned from class readings, lectures and discussions, assignments, and guest speakers. You will need to make your case for each of the trends you have identified, including citations to relevant supporting materials. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided.

### 3) Class Attendance/Participation (15%)

As this is a learner-centered course, your attendance and participation is essential. You are expected to always arrive for class on time (arriving late is the same as being absent). Attendance will be taken each class by passing around a sign-in sheet. **TWO UNEXECUSED ABSENCES will be allowed over the course of the quarter.** Approved excused absences must have either a doctor’s note or a note from the faculty advisor of a university-sanctioned organization/event. **IMPORTANT: It is your responsibility to sign-in. If your signature isn’t on the sheet, you will be marked absent. I will always try to remind you.**

Come to class prepared to participate – to actively discuss the readings and interact with the instructor and your classmates. This is where the real learning happens. Be sure to read, ask questions, disagree, formulate your own ideas, and engage with members of the class. Our ideas, opinions and viewpoints will differ depending on our backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge. It's okay in this class to respectfully disagree with the readings and with each other. I encourage you to speak up, talk back, and offer your own ideas. It's also important to recognize that any one of us may have personal experience with these issues and it's important to be conscious of this as you talk about the issues. You will receive points for attendance and participation.

Your class participation will be considered in the final evaluation of your class work. I will evaluate your **class participation** as follows:

A = Student reads assignments, actively engages with speakers, and interacts with other class members; for example, an "A" in this area means that you ask questions, express judgments and/or pose questions on multiple occasions at each class session; and also that you actively participate and contribute to small group discussions and activities.

B = Student participates as above about 75 percent of the time.

C = Student does not volunteer, but only responds to direct questions; student's responses demonstrate vague familiarity with course readings and assignments.

D and below = Student never volunteers, cannot respond to direct questions, keeps silent during class discussions, and is unable to summarize readings.

**You will not receive an "A" on the class attendance / participation part of your grade simply for showing up and missing two classes or less. Consistent and meaningful class participation is critical. After two unexcused absences, your overall grade for the course may be lowered for each additional absence.**

If you come to the class late or leave early, there is a very high chance that you will miss announcements of changes in the class schedule, readings, and/or activities. I am always here to help, but it is *your responsibility* to obtain all of the information about schedule changes, readings, handouts, and location of events.

#### **4) Individual Blog Assignment (20%)**

You will help maintain the class blog (<http://www.DePaulDigitalPR.com>) which will feature summaries and critiques submitted by you and your classmates on current PR campaigns and programs in which social media plays a major role. This is a great way for the class to gain exposure to and familiarity with current campaigns and how social media is being utilized. On the assigned presentation date, you will post your summary/critique to the blog and make a short mini-presentation to the class. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided.

#### **5) Radian6 Brand Monitoring Project (30%)**

For your final project in the class, you will gain hands-on experience using the Radian6 social media monitoring and engagement platform to monitor the social media conversations surrounding a brand you select and its major peers (competitors). Based on your Radian6 analyses, you will compile a PowerPoint slide deck and make a presentation to the class in which you summarize your findings and make actionable recommendations. You will upload a copy of your slide deck to the class SlideShare account and turn in a hard copy. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided. Peer evaluations will factor in your final grade on the project.

## Deadlines for Presentations and Reports

Deadlines are real. Late work will be reduced by *one letter grade* for each 24 hour period it is not turned in. Worked turned in during the middle or end of class is considered late. In a professional environment, the consequences of missing deadlines for reports and presentations are much worse.

**IMPORTANT: Assigned individual and team presentations *cannot* be made up at a later date.**

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## Final Notes:

- The instructor will make every effort to adhere to this class schedule and grading system, but reserves the right to make necessary changes.
- While laptops, netbooks, and tablets are welcome for taking notes during class discussions, please DO NOT use them to Facebook, IM, e-mail, etc. during class (unless of course you're visiting our blog ☺)
- No reading of newspapers, magazines, books, etc. during class. While I appreciate your support for our friends in journalism, it is distracting and disrespectful to your classmates and the instructor.
- Please turn your mobile phones to vibrate when in class unless they are needed for emergency purposes. Also, please NO TEXTING during class (this includes texting under your desks).
- This class is challenging, but in the end it is rewarding and helps prepare you with the social media knowledge and skills to succeed in the internship and job markets. If you notice yourself having trouble, please see me immediately. Also feel free to approach me about any concerns you might have.
- Again, the following dates and topics are a good faith attempt at providing you with a tentative schedule, but please note that they are not etched in stone!

## Tentative Class Schedule

**Week 1:** Thurs. (9/8) Course Overview and Introduction

**Week 2:** Tues. (9/13) Watch CNBC documentary: “The Facebook Obsession”; review “The Facebook Obsession” reaction paper assignment

Thurs. (9/15) The game has changed: what social media means for PR; discuss Class Blog post/presentation assignment and using the Posterous blogging platform

- **Deadline to sign up for DePaulDigitalPR.com blog dates (time in class)**

**Week 3:** Tues. (9/20) Social media monitoring (using RSS/Google Reader – blogosphere and forums)

- **“The Facebook Obsession” reaction paper due (digital drop box)**

Thurs. (9/22) Social media monitoring (the Twitterverse and beyond)

- **Posts/presentations to DePaulDigitalPR.com class blog begin**

**Week 4:** Tues. (9/27) Tracking public search interest (Google Trends/Insights for Search, Hitwise) and special guest panel on “Digital PR: Tools, Tips, and Trends”

Thurs. (9/29) **NO CLASS!**

**Week 5:** Tues. (10/4) Internal site analytics tools and external site analytics tools (Quantcast, Compete.com, Alexa) and tracking tools; overview of Final Team Project

Thurs. (10/6) S.E.O. and S.E.M. (Google AdWords, Facebook Ads, sponsored Tweets)

- **Deadline to form teams/select brands/peers for final project (Radian6)**

**Week 6:** Tues. (10/11) The new influencers/blogger outreach (Klout, Alexa, Technorati) and Guest speaker – Jenny Weigle, Social Media Manager, CareerBuilder

Thurs. (10/13) Radian6 Training Session in class

**Week 7:** Tues. (10/18) Setting up Radian6 Profiles (WORK DAY in brand teams)

Thurs. (10/20) Creating winning viral videos

- **Sign-up by team for meeting time slots for class on 10/27**

**Week 8:** Tues. (10/25) Developing contests for PR campaigns on Twitter and Facebook

Thurs. (10/27) Radian6: Progress Reports (INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS with brand teams)

**Week 9:** Tues. (11/1) Mobile apps, QR codes, location based services; review the “Top Three Trends in Digital PR” short paper assignment

Thurs. (11/3) Guest speaker – Joe Cutaia, Publicist, k101 agency and WORK DAY in brand teams

**Week 10:** Tues. (11/8) Top Trends in Digital PR class discussion; Review/questions on final project; and WORK DAY in brand teams

- **“Top Three Trends in Digital PR” paper due (digital drop box)**

Thurs. (11/10) Final Team Presentations (Day 1)

- **Slide decks for ALL TEAMS due along with team evals (hard copy!)**

**Week 11:** Tues. (11/15) Final Team Presentations (Day 2)

*Note: The assigned readings for each week (primarily PDFs of recent industry and trade articles) will be found within the “Weekly Readings” folders by Week (Week 1, Week 2, etc.) located on D2L.*