



Course: PRAD 595 • Section 302 • Spring 2011

## **Corporate Communication**

Class Times: Mon. 5:45 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Classroom: Lewis Center, Room 1010

**Professor: Dr. Matt Ragas**

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**Office Hours: Mon. 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. and 4:45 - 5:45 p.m. (or by appt.)**

### Course Description:

This course is designed to facilitate a detailed understanding of the development, practice, goals, and responsibilities of corporate communication, and three of its major specialty areas – media relations, employee communications, and investor relations. Through readings and discussions, in-class exercises, guest speakers, and team assignments and presentations, students will gain a strong foundation in the fundamentals and major concepts underlying the modern corporate communication function. Students will gain practical experience by analyzing these specialty areas and key corporate communication concepts, such as corporate reputation, brand image and brand equity, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), in the context of *Fortune 500* firms.

This class was developed with generous feedback and support from a variety of industry professionals and organizations with a major Chicago presence and interest in corporate communication including Business Wire, Edelman, Financial Dynamics (FD)/FTI Consulting, United Continental Holdings, and Burson-Marsteller.

### Course Objectives:

- To provide an overview of the history, growth, and trends behind the practice of modern corporate communication, and the management of three of its major specialty areas (media relations, employee communications/employee relations, and investor relations).
- To gain a detailed understanding of corporate reputation, brand image and brand equity, and corporate social responsibility – all of which have become major focal points for corporate communication.
- To practice developing and applying this new knowledge of the corporate communication function through completing analyses of corporate communication efforts within *Fortune 500* firms and stakeholder perceptions of these efforts.
- To enhance presentation and writing skills in communicating persuasively, clearly, and successfully.

### Required Reading Materials:

Goodman, M. B., & Hirsch, P. B. (2010). *Corporate communication: Strategic adaptation for global practice*. New York: Peter Lang.

### Recommended Reading Materials:

Fombrun, C. J., & van Riel, C. B. M. (2004). *Fame and fortune: How successful companies build winning reputations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Prentice Hall.

van Riel, C. B. M., & Fombrun, C. (2007). *Essentials of corporate communication: Implementing practices for effective reputation management*. New York: Routledge.

The required text is available at the campus bookstore, Amazon.com, and off campus.

Additional required readings will be posted on Desire2Learn (D2L). Check regularly for news and updates.

### Course Evaluation:

The evaluation of the coursework will be based on the student's performance in five areas, each which constitute a portion of the final grade. These areas include: 1) individual blog assignment (posting to class blog and making a brief presentation), 2) CSR short reaction paper, 3) class attendance and participation, including a series of in-class exercises, 4) team paper and presentation #1, and 5) team paper and presentation #2.

The following provides a point allocation for each of these areas:

1) News Blog Assignment (Individual Post and Presentation)	(outline below)	30
2) CSR Short Reaction paper (Individual Paper)	(outline below)	10
3) Attendance/Participation (Individual)	(outline below)	40
4) Paper and Presentation #1 (Team Assignment)	(outline below)	60
5) Paper and Presentation #2 (Team Assignment)	(outline below)	60
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>200 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) Individual News Blog Assignment (30 points)

You will help maintain the class blog (<http://www.DePaulCorpComm.com>) which will feature summaries and critiques of recent news stories in which corporate communication (including media relations, employee communications, investor relations, CSR, reputation, branding, etc.) plays a major role. This is a great opportunity to explore how corporate communication and the news media intersect in a mini-case style format throughout the quarter. By the assigned class date, you will have made your post regarding the recent news

story to the blog and will then make a short presentation (~5-8 minutes) summarizing the news story and providing your critique/reaction to the corporate communication announcement or response. No PowerPoint, although you may use the classroom computer. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided.

## 2) CSR Short Reaction Paper (10 points)

You will write a 2-3-page double-spaced reaction paper in response to a series of readings offering sharply opposing perspectives on the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). You will briefly summarize these two perspectives (shareholder theory versus stakeholder theory); state which of these two perspectives you agree the most with; and why. An assignment sheet will be provided. The readings will be posted to D2L.

## 3) Class Attendance/Participation (40 points)

As this is a learner-centered course, your attendance and active participation in class is essential. You are expected to always arrive for class on time (arriving late or leaving early is the same as being absent). Attendance will be taken each class by passing around a sign-in sheet. **E-mail me ([mragas@depaul.edu](mailto:mragas@depaul.edu)) in advance if you plan to miss a class for a work, family, or health reason and I will likely count this as an *excused absence*.** If I don't hear from you in advance, I will record your absence as an *unexcused absence*.

You only have the potential to earn an "A" on the class attendance and participation part of your grade if you miss one class or less AND you *consistently* contribute to class discussion *throughout the quarter*. Participation is based on the quality and quantity of your contributions. **IMPORTANT: It is your responsibility to sign-in. If your signature isn't on the sign-in sheet, you will be marked as absent. I will always try to remind you.**

## 4) Paper and Presentation #1: Reputation, Brand, and CSR Company Analysis (60 points)

For this first team assignment, you and your teammates will select a *Fortune 500* corporation and then analyze the corporate communication function of this company and how it is perceived by its stakeholders. Specifically, your team will assess the corporate reputation, corporate brand image and brand equity, and corporate social responsibility of the firm. This will include analyzing annual rankings of reputation, brands, and CSR; collecting relevant information that is publicly available on the company's website; and researching news articles about the firm pertaining to these three focal concepts using search engines and news databases (e.g. LexisNexis). After analyzing these data, you will draw conclusions from this information and offer recommendations. You will turn in a report on the assigned date and make a presentation (~10-15 mins.) on your findings to the class. An assignment sheet will be provided. Team member evals will factor in your grade.

## 5) Paper and Presentation #2: "Specialty Areas" Company Analysis (60 points)

For this second and final team assignment, you and your teammates will analyze the corporate communication function of the same *Fortune 500* corporation as it pertains to its media relations, employee communications, and investor relations activities. Each of these three specialty communication disciplines often fall under the purview of, or are affiliated with, the corporate communication department. Your team will collect information on each of these three areas by visiting and analyzing the company website and searching for and reading news articles (using search engines and news databases) about the firm pertaining to these three specialty areas. After analyzing these data, you will summarize this information, draw conclusions, and offer recommendations. You will turn in a report on the assigned date and make a presentation (~10-15 mins.) on your findings to the class. An assignment sheet will be provided. Team member evals will factor in your grade.

## 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 or does not follow the submission format. Work turned in during the middle or end of class (this includes making blog posts after the start of class) is considered late. This pertains to both team and individual work. As you know, in a professional environment, the consequences of missing deadlines are much worse.

**IMPORTANT: Assigned individual (blog post assignment) and team presentations *cannot* be made up at a later date so please prepare in advance. If a team member is absent that day, the show must still go on.**

## Academic Honesty

Cheating and 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. Please don't put yourself in this situation.

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 material non-sexist, diverse, and multi-cultural. Should I ever fail to meet this goal, please let me know immediately.

## The Writing Center

Consider visiting the Writing Center to discuss your 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'll 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/>

### 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.

### Final Notes:

- I will make every effort to adhere to this class schedule and grading system, but reserves the right to make necessary changes.
- While laptop computers and netbooks 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 and passion for journalism, it is distracting and disrespectful to your classmates and the professor.
- Please turn your mobile phones to vibrate when in class unless they are needed for emergency purposes. Also, please NO TEXTING during class.
- This class is challenging, but in the end it is rewarding and helps prepare you with knowledge and skills for the successful practice of corporate communication. 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. We will adapt as needed to circumstances.
- If you cannot meet with me during office hours, please see me after class, generally we can meet then, or we can find another time that works for both of us. If you do drop by during office hours, if you e-mail me in advance regarding your question(s), you are likely to get a more detailed answer in person.

## Tentative Class Schedule

- Week 1:** 3/28: Course Overview and Introductions
- *Review of syllabus and class blog assignment (individual)*
  - **Sign-up for blog assignment post/presentation date by end of class**
  - *Review using news databases (LexisNexis, NewsBank, ProQuest)*
- Week 2:** 4/4: Historical Foundation and Growth Drivers of the Corporate Communication Function (read *Corporate Communication* by Goodman & Hirsch: pp. 1-39, 87-94, 97-107)
- *Schedule posted for class blog assignment (blog post and presentation)*
  - *Review first team assignment (corporate reputation, brand, and CSR company analysis)*
  - Guest speaker: Raschanda Hall, Global Media Relations Manager, Business Wire
- Week 3:** 4/11: Focal Concepts: Corporate Reputation  
Focal Concepts: Corporate Brand Image / Brand Equity  
(read *Essentials of Corporate Communication* by van Riel & Fombrun: pp. 38-60 and 228-259; read Ch. 1 “Why Reputations Matter” of *Fame & Fortune* by Fombrun & van Riel)
- **Class blog assignment posts and presentations begin (start of class)**
  - *In-class discussion exercise on the reputation of certain brands*
  - *Form teams for team assignments and exercises by end of class*
  - Guest speaker: Joe Poulos, SVP, Financial Communication and IR, Edelman
- Week 4:** 4/18: Focal Concepts: Corporate Social Responsibility  
(read *Corporate Communication* by Goodman and Hirsch: pp. 60 - 74; read *International Encyclopedia of Public Relations*, Barron’s magazine, Friedman, and Freeman articles on D2L)
- **Short reaction paper on dueling perspectives regarding CSR due at the start of class**
  - *In-class discussion on shareholder theory vs. stakeholder theory; Pepsi Refresh program*
  - Guest speaker: Alex Gorbokon, Senior Associate, Burson-Marsteller
- Week 5:** 4/25: **Mid-Quarter Presentations (Corporate Reputation, Brand Value and CSR Analysis)**
- **Team report #1, copy of slides, and team evaluations all due at the start of class**
  - Guest speaker: Mike Trevino, Director of Financial Communication, United Airlines
- Week 6:** 5/2: Special Event (6:30 pm, LL Theater, 14 E. Jackson (Daley building))
- Guest speaker: Steve Restivo, Director of Corporate Affairs, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
- Week 7:** 5/9: Specialty Areas: Media Relations  
(read *Corporate Communication* by Goodman and Hirsch: pp. 160-161, 180, 192-193; read Ch. 6 “Be Visible” of *Fame & Fortune* by Fombrun & van Riel, and What Makes Reporters Angry, both on D2L)
- *Overview of final team assignment (specialty areas company analysis)*
  - *In-class exercise on making a successful “elevator pitch”*
  - Guest speaker: Ken Bouton/Elaine Stiles, Business Wire, discuss online media rooms
- Week 8:** 5/16: Specialty Areas: Employee Communications  
(read *Corporate Communication* by Goodman & Hirsch: pp. 49-52, 125-128, 162-165; read *Essentials of Corporate Communication* by van Riel & Fombrun: pp. 188-193; read PR Daily, Bulldog Reporter, and Edelman: Rethinking Employee Engagement articles on D2L)
- *In-class exercise on employee communication during a corporate crisis*
  - Guest speaker: Christopher Hannegan, EVP, Corporate Affairs, Edelman
- Week 9:** 5/23: Specialty Areas: Investor Relations  
(read *Corporate Communication* by Goodman & Hirsch: pp. 130-132, 173-180; read *Essentials of Corporate Communication* by van Riel & Fombrun: pp. 183-187; read NYT and NIRI articles on D2L)
- *In-class exercise on analyzing the IR section of websites*
  - *Review of final project (specialty areas company analysis) and questions*
  - Guest speaker: Bryan Armstrong, Managing Director, Financial Dynamics (FD)
- Week 10:** 5/30: HOLIDAY – Memorial Day (University Closed)
- EXAM WEEK:** 6/6: **Final Presentations (Specialty Areas Company Analysis)**
- **Team report #2, copy of slides, and team evaluations all due at the start of class**

*Note: All readings will be found in either the Corporate Communication (Goodman and Hirsch) text or posted as a PDF document to D2L*