

COMM 441 Master of Science – Global Strategic Communication Capstone, Spring 2023

Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30 (class will meet virtually)

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Overview

This is the culminating course in the Master of Science - Global Strategic Communication program.

You'll synthesize and apply knowledge and skills from your previous courses to demonstrate mastery of your topic. You'll build relationships with professionals. And you'll help launch your career via networking as well as public-facing materials you'll create in the course.

Your Capstone will consist of:

- A white paper about the specific marketing practice your project will live within (i.e. advertising, PR, crisis communication, internal communication, influencers etc.)
- A white paper on the particular sector your topic lives within (i.e. packaged goods, financial services, non-profit etc.).
- A comprehensive strategic communication plan for a specific company
- Supporting creative samples for that company
- A professional-quality presentation of your project
- Something that makes your expertise public (i.e. a website, blog, podcast etc.)

I'll approve the topics of your practice area report, industry/sector report and communication plan before you start.

The class will meet virtually to review assignments, share ideas and thinking, and learn from occasional guest speakers. Except for final-project presentations, most classes will be fairly short – a 30-40 minutes. During class, please keep your cameras on to build community and show respect to your peers, guest speaker and instructor.

You'll also meet with me individually twice during the semester, via Zoom or phone call.

Full-class meetings and the two individual talks with me are mandatory.

How we'll work

I have a full-time job separate from teaching this course (see "About Me" below), so I don't have scheduled Loyola office hours. But I think you'll find I'm very accessible. If you want to talk besides our two one-on-ones, we'll figure out a way to make that happen. **For fastest response, email me at garydoyle1@yahoo.com.**

Expectations

This is a labor-intensive course. Expect to put in 8-10 hours per week to succeed.

Assignments are due on Sakai by the posted time and date. Late assignments will get a zero. If you have a health issue or family emergency, obviously your welfare comes first. But nothing short of that will have much traction with me.

In full class sessions and particularly when students are presenting, please give your full attention.

By the end of this course, you will have:

- Found, analyzed and synthesized information in the service of preparing academic research-style reports about a specific advertising or public relations practice, industry and company you have the greatest interest in.
- Developed a fully realized strategic communication plan.
- Identified significant issues in your chosen field.
- Started relationships with professionals in the field in which you want to pursue a career.

Schedule

Please note this is subject to change for any number of reasons. But we'll stick with it as best we can.

Wk	Date	Meeting Instructions*	Assignments Due	Topics
1	1/17	Full group session		Introductions, review syllabus, assign topic for practice area and industry reports
2	1/24	Full group session	Topic for practice area report and industry report	Share topics with class, assign practice area and industry reports, sign-up sheet, guest presenter Kelly Hallisy on library resources
3	1/31	Individual meetings by appointment #1		
4	2/7	Full group session	Practice area report	Assign public-facing-material idea, guest presenter on strategy
5	2/14	Individual work week		
6	2/21	Full group session	Industry report	Assign interview plan, guest presenter Jeff Kean on emerging brand platforms
7	2/28	Full group session	Public-facing-material idea	Discuss public-facing-material ideas, assign communications plan
8	3/7	Spring break, no class		
9	3/14	Full group session	Interview plan	Guest presenter Jill Geisler on interviewing
10	3/21	Individual work week		

11	3/28	Individual meetings by appointment #2		
12	4/4	Individual work week	Communications plan	
13	4/11	Full class session		Guest presenter on presenting
14	4/18	Individual meetings by appointment #2	Public-facing material	
15	4/25	Full group session	Capstone projects due	Final presentations (half of class)
16	5/2	Full group session		Final presentations (half of class)

Performance evaluation and grading

20% practice area report	100-95% = A	76-73% = C
20% industry report	94-90% = A-	72-70% = C-
20% communications plan	89-87% = B+	69-67% = D+
10% interview plan	86-83% = B	66-63% = D
10% public-facing material	82-80% = B-	62-60% = D
10% summary presentation	79-77% = C+	59% > = F
10% attendance		

Assignment Specifics

Practice Area Report (3–4 pages)

This is an overall look at a particular marketing practice (i.e. advertising, public relations, social media, influencers etc.). This will prepare you for interviews as well as your communication plan that will come later in the semester. You'll research this through library/databases and secondary sources.

Objectives:

- Gain specialized in-depth knowledge of a selected practice area and how it fits into the bigger communication picture
- Identify resources such as professional and industry databases, websites, blogs, publications, journals, organizations, thought leaders, and practitioners
- Become familiar with professional associations and organizations and their offerings, like informational white papers, events, and activities
- Prepare for and develop questions for interviews with professionals and apply knowledge to build a real-world plan

Make sure to give your report a title.

Use these headings/subheads in your report to help focus your research and structure your paper:

Introduction

A few lines identifying the practice area and explaining the purpose of the document (i.e. to better understand the practice area, to provide in-depth descriptions and insight for an area, to prepare for interviews etc.).

Description

Think of this as a deep dive into a specific practice area. Think through the terms we throw around all the time -- advertising, public relations, branding, crisis communication – and explain what they really mean and what they really are. Describe your practice area citing sources, even if they vary, to give a rich picture of your area.

Best Practices (2 examples)

Give at least two examples with descriptions of good practices you can learn from.

Context

Where does the practice area, especially if it is a specialization, usually fit in? Give it some context – for example you might have to explain advertising if you are working on branding because advertising is a tool to create a picture in the mind of the consumer. Or you might have to describe public relations if you are writing on crisis communication or influencers. Use sources.

Issues and Trends (3 specifics)

What are the issues and what are the trends in the practice area? Provide one to two for each or at least three total in this section.

Thought Leaders (2 identified)

Identify two current thought leaders in your area. What are their ideas? What are their credentials (title, organization, degrees)?

Professional Associations (2 identified)

Identify **at least two professional associations** (sometimes referred to as trade associations) relevant to your practice focus. These are non-profit organizations (they are not profit-oriented consultants). While there are specific organizations, like the IMA (Influencer Marketing Association) and AIC (American Influencer Council), there are others that may not be so specific but will also be appropriate, such as the AMA (American Marketing Association) which covers advertising, branding, social media, and other communication practices, or the PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) which includes public relations, social media, influencers, crisis communication, and other aspects of messaging. These resources should provide you with white papers and other information about the field, such as established annual activities like trade shows, conferences, and other events that you can use in your report. Include url/contact information and a short description of each organization.

Major Annual Events (2 events)

What are major or annual events, such as conferences, seminars, or award shows? These might be hosted by organizations like PRSA, or AMA which offers BrandSmart every year (4/27 in 2022). There are other activities area practitioners need to be aware of or regularly attend, such as the Super Bowl, SXSW, or the Cannes Lions Festival (for advertising and creativity).

References

Include a reference page of your sources in good form, including alphabetical and consistent formatting

Writing and Formatting

Use an active voice, avoid clichés; format with single-space text, extra space between paragraphs, number the pages; use 12-pt font, bold titles and subheads. Do not include tables or charts – instead, explain the highlights.

Resources

Consider using WARC and other general Libraries databases such as Business Source Complete or Communication & Mass Media Complete; business and industry press such as *Advertising Age*, *AdWeek*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and others; or academic journals.

Industry Report (4–5 pages)

This is a deep dive into a particular industry or sector. You'll research this through library/databases/secondary sources. It will prepare you for interviews and help with your communication plan that will come later in the semester.

Objectives:

- Gain knowledge of a selected industry area
- Identify resources, such as professional and industry databases, websites, publications, journals, and organizations, including trade associations, that offer relevant information and activities, used by professionals to understand a marketplace
- Understand the industry enough to find gaps and opportunities where strategic communication plan and ideas can be applied

Make sure to give your report a title.

Use these headings/subheads in your report to help focus your research and structure your paper:

Introduction

Identify the industry area you are focusing on. Explain the purpose of your efforts (to better understand the industry, learn of opportunities, fulfill a course requirement, or something else).

Primary Companies/Brands

Describe or define your industry area. Identify the primary companies and brands in qualitative terms, rich descriptions and personalities, based on information from their websites (text, colors, taglines, visuals, history, etc.) or other sources. Use ABI/Inform, IBIS, Passport GMID, MarketLine, and company websites.

Financial and Other Data

Describe your industry and companies/brands in quantitative terms, such as industry/company revenue, market share, number of employees, number of locations, number of items built/sold, etc. Use ABI/Inform, IBIS, Passport GMID, MarketLine, Sports Market Analytics, Mergent Online, PrivCo, and other sources.

Market Demographics

Explain the current customer or audience. Who buys, decides, reviews, or makes the plans to buy the products in your industry? Learn the relative consumer differences of major products or brands in your area to become more knowledgeable. (For example, purchasers of wet cat food tend to have a higher income than those of dry cat food.) Consider using MRI+, Statista, Mintel, and news articles sourced from Business Source Complete, Communication & Mass Media Complete, and others.

Consumer Spending

How much do the products in your area cost, or how much do consumers spend? Per occasion, annually, or other? In general, or for specific brands? This helps to understand whether this is an impulse purchase like a candy bar, or a major acquisition with lots of planning, like a car or cruise. Look at this in different perspectives. Check Statista, Mintel, Business Source Complete, Communication & Mass Media Complete, and others.

Current Media/Communication Budgets/Activities

What communication activities are the company/brands using in this industry? Are they using unique promotions, sponsorships, influencers, or some other? What is the percent spending for the various media platforms? Are some investing more in outdoor or multicultural media compared to others? Use AdForum, Winmo (Redbooks), WARC, Meltwater, Business Source Complete, Communication & Mass Media Complete, and other databases.

Issues Affecting the Industry (2 issues)

Identify two issues affecting the industry – maybe these are consumer related, culturally related, or specific to the industry. Creativity here is identifying/knowing issues that you may later see as opportunities for the industry. Consider IBIS, Mintel, WARC, Passport, and Business Source Complete, Communication & Mass Media Complete, and others.

Industry or Relevant Consumer Trends (2 trends)

Similar to the issues section, identify two trends in the industry, practice, or culture that could be relevant to the industry. Use IBIS, Mintel, WARC, Passport, and Business Source Complete, Communication & Mass Media Complete, and others.

Professional Associations (2 organizations)

Identify at least two professional associations (sometimes referred to as trade associations). These are non-profit organizations that are relevant to your industry, like the National Association of Realtors, NAHF (National Association of Health and Fitness), and PBA (Professional Beauty Association). These resources should provide you with white papers and other information, such as established annual activities like trade shows, conferences, and other events that you can use in your report. Include url/contact information and a short description of each organization.

Major Events and Activities (2 events/activities)

Identify two established, annual events, like Toy Fair, Restaurant Week, Chicago Auto Show, and the like.

References

Include a reference page of credible sources in good form, including alphabetical and consistent formatting.

Writing and Formatting

Use an active voice, avoid clichés; format with single-space text, extra space between paragraphs, number the pages; use 12-pt font, bold titles and subheads. Do not include tables or charts, instead explain highlights.

Strategic Communication Plan (5-7 pages)

Create an integrated strategic communication plan for a brand or organization within your area of focus. This is a recommendation, so write in a confident, active voice. Tell a story. Use sources from your practice and industry research adding to it as necessary to fill in missing pieces and make it specific to the challenge.

Objectives:

- Apply new knowledge gained through research and interviews
- Demonstrate communication skills and professional competencies in a chosen communication area
- Develop creative communication plans and materials based in real world context that deal with a current issue, person, organization, product, service, or program
- Create relevant portfolio materials

Your audience is CEOs who might be interested in funding the plan. Your plan could also end up being part of your professional portfolio.

Everyone's plan is going to be different – for example, crisis communication will have very different components from a beauty-product campaign --- but these sections should generally be covered:

Title Page

Create a clear, descriptive title (i.e., Shavers for Women: How Gillette Can Expand Its Products Beyond Its Male Core).

Executive Summary/Background

This is a concise (one-page or so) overview of your plan. It summarizes the sections (situation analysis, target audience, objectives, strategy, and tactics, etc.). Everything in your executive summary should also appear elsewhere in your recommendation/proposal. This will likely be written last after you've written the rest of your plan.

Situation Analysis

Describe the way things are right now and present them in a way that inspires the reader to act to solve or jump on the problem or opportunity. Do not mention the solution here. Show the readers the relevant facts – from industry, consumer behavior, culture, economics, to industry trends and issues – and help them realize the situation requires a response. Include competitors and their status. Use sources.

Statement of Purpose

Briefly announce the purpose of the proposal/recommendation which should be obvious having just read the situation analysis, readers should be saying "We need to act!" This should be brief, clear, maybe a sentence or so.

Communication Objectives

These should be measurable and focused, have a benchmark (where are you now) and goal (where do you want to be), and have a time span (how long is the duration of the communication)

efforts). Are you seeking to create awareness, reinforce existing attitudes and behavior, change a perception, expand a market, create loyalty, create more positive opinions, educate, reposition the brand? Is your plan for 3 months or longer? Or shorter? Would you create a test plan for a specific market to learn before you roll it out to other key locations?

Target Audience/Public and Rationale

Identify the target and provide rationale with sources, like MRI+. While many may want to hear your message, communicators and creatives focus on a target (this is strategy), so be specific. Provide a sample profile or two to bring your target to life.

Message Strategy (Positioning, Promise, Copy Points, Tone)

This information helps generate the message and build a unique position and reason your target should believe and act on your communication. It might include how your product or service is unique, different/positioned compared to the competition, or what it promises, and why the target should notice, care, believe, change opinion, or buy. Sometimes this can include features and benefits or the tone of the campaign. The message strategy can also be considered or includes information that is usually part of a creative brief.

Media/Communication Channels, and Rationale

What communication platforms are you going to employ and why and which did you consider and decide to not use, and why? Use sources.

Scheduling/Content Calendar

What is the schedule for the communication? Again, consider a test and take a three month or so plan and make it real. When and why are you going to launch your campaign? You probably want to refresh the message around key dates, holidays, etc. Show that. If you use email or social media, when will you send/post these? As you know, there are better times to send emails as there are different response rates for emails sent out on weekends versus on Monday, for example. Be sure the efforts are coordinated on all the different platforms – so the website message is in synch with the Instagram visual, etc. Use sources.

Measurement

How are you going to measure your success? This needs to be in line with your objectives. Are you going to email a survey? Count the shares, likes, etc.? What are you measuring? Attitudes, perceptions, knowledge?

Reference Page

Include a reference page of credible sources in good form, including alphabetical and consistent formatting.

Creative Materials (3 samples)

Bring your plan to life by creating three creative pieces that support it. Depending on your project, these might include press releases, media alerts, PSAs, ads in different mediums, paid social, a media kit, media list, pitch letter, brochure, flier, newsletter, text messages, or other materials.

Interview Plan and Interviews

This is a two-part assignment.

The first is to develop a plan – objectives, questions, and interviewees.

The second is conducting the interviews and preparing a summary of each, with at least one quote from each person.

Assignment Objectives

- Gather information about your professional practice
- Gain insight into current and future issues in the field
- Answer some of the questions that surfaced during your research
- Learn examples of successful campaigns and get quotes for your summary report
- Network with professionals
- Practice interviewing and improve your interviewing skills

The plan needs to include objectives for interviews, at least five well-thought-out general questions, and at least three additional questions related specifically to your interviewee and their roles. Your plan should also have the name, title, company and contact info for at least three interviewees.

The second part of this assignment is to conduct the interviews and write a summary of the highlights. I'm not looking for a transcript. Rather, you should synthesize the interview and capture the important points you can learn from and use. You need to also include at least one quote in each summary

Summary Presentation

Prepare a Powerpoint presentation (10 minutes maximum) of your project to present to the class at the end of the semester.

Assignment Objectives

- Synthesize your learning and experiences from over the semester
- Showcase your knowledge and skills
- Practice public speaking and presentation competencies

Tell us a story. Highlight your learning with evidence. Show us insights from interviews or your communications plan. Spotlight things you're particularly proud of from your project. Tell us what inspired you to tackle your topic. Present confidently and enthusiastically.

Your presentation must also include an idea of how you've made your work public so it can be easily linked to or viewed. This can be in the form of a website, podcast, Medium article, webinar. It's your call, but this must be produced and finished by the time of your final presentation – not just an idea.

About me:

I'm a Group Creative Director/Senior Vice President at Cramer Krasselt, the second-largest independent advertising agency in the US. There I work on Porsche, the Alzheimer's Association, Marzetti and U.S. Cotton. Before CK I was an Executive Creative Director at Leo Burnett, where I was creative lead on McDonald's, Kellogg's and Morgan Stanley. My work has been recognized by the One Show,

Communication Arts, the Webbys, the Effies and the London International Film Festival, and that's just in the last few years. I co-host the internationally acclaimed podcast "So There!" and have an unhinged pug dog named Lou.

Courses I've taught at Loyola include Advertising/PR Capstone, Introduction to Creative Concepts and Advertising Copywriting. I've also guest-lectured at Notre Dame, Northwestern, Illinois, Indiana and the Ross School of Business at University of Michigan.

Cheating and plagiarism:

The short answer: don't. It won't end well for you.

The long answer: a basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents.

Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;

Providing information to another student during an examination;

Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;

Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;

Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;

Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or

Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, audio, video, etc.;

Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;

Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://luc.edu/english/writing.shtml#source>

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. A student who submits the same work for credit in two or more classes will be judged guilty of academic dishonesty, and will be subject to sanctions described below. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

The office of the Dean of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:
http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations.

(The School of Communication policy is based entirely on and is consistent with the Academic Integrity Policy of the College of Arts & Sciences.)

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy

Loyola University Chicago is committed to maintaining an environment which respects the dignity of all individuals. Accordingly, Loyola University will not tolerate sexual harassment by or of its students, faculty, or employees. To the extent practicable, Loyola University will attempt to protect the Loyola community from sexual harassment by vendors, consultants, and other third parties who interact with the Loyola community. Loyola University is promulgating this policy to reaffirm its opposition to sexual harassment and to emphasize that learning opportunities and employment opportunities must not be

interfered with by sexual harassment. deal with individuals found to have engaged in harassment, discrimination and/or retaliation in violation of this policy. For more information on this policy please visit: http://www.luc.edu/hr/policies/policy_sexualharassment.shtml