**Wagner Logo**

**PADM-GP 4450  
Strategic Communications for Advocacy**

**Fall 2021**

**Instructor Information**

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**Course Information**

* Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays, 4:55-6:35pm
* Class Location: 60 5th Ave, Rm 110, Washington Square

**Introduction**

Organizational storytelling both effectively communicates an organization’s mission and builds empathy for its cause. A story is more than an exposition, climax, and resolution. Effective storytelling weaves a narrative that tells a systemic story about the social justice movement. The course will offer an overview on how to strategically use values-based communications, helping students understand how to move persuadable audiences to garner support for social justice issues.

This course teaches students how to communicate with the public and work with the media. The concepts and skills prepare students to generate public support for their organization's mission, strategic initiatives, and fund-raising activities. Students learn to position organizations in the public eye and translate complex concepts into clear and concise messages for public consumption. They develop skills in written and oral communication, critical thinking, and problem solving. Students learn about a range of communications vehicles and discuss ways to use those vehicles to get their messages out.

The course was inspired by[**How to Be An Effective Activist**](https://wagner.nyu.edu/news/story/how-be-effective-activist-90-minute-training-nonviolent-action-draws-400), a 90-minute training on non-violent action.

**Course and Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Discuss the role of storytelling and narrative in strategic communications and its importance.
2. Describe the fundamentals of framing and messaging through a values-based communications lens.
3. Explain the concept and practice of public narrative and how to move from values to actions.
4. Craft and incorporate digital storytelling.
5. Identify ways in which public opinion research informs and shapes strategic communications.
6. Learn how to create narrative-led campaigns using story-based strategy.
7. Create a comprehensive strategic communications plan.

**Outline of Class**

Classes will initially involve roughly 50 minutes of lecture, 30 minutes of discussion, 15 minutes of questions, and 5 minutes of concluding remarks will pull together some of the key points, highlight ongoing areas of empirical and theoretical debate, and frame the readings for the subsequent class. Lectures will **NOT** summarize what is in the readings. Class participation will constitute a significant percentage of the final grade. My lectures are very interactive and typically include classroom exercises to help us move from communications theory to practice. Over the course of the semester we may alter the proportion of lecture and discussion time. During the course, we will use current events as case studies for strategic communications. I encourage students to tell me which topics they wish to examine, and I will weave them into the classes and forums.

**Syllabus**

The syllabus is designed for those interested in both theoretical and practical applications of strategic communications. The communications methodologies and worksheets outlined in the course may be particularly useful for students interested in crafting campaigns that reach and shift the opinions of persuadable audiences, key stakeholders, donors, the media, and/or decisionmakers.

**Grades, Assignments and Evaluation**

There is no curve in this course. Everyone may receive an A or everyone may receive an F.

This course will abide by the Wagner School’s [general policy guidelines](https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies). It is the student’s responsibility to become familiar with these policies. All students are expected to pursue and meet the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity.

**Course Requirements**

**1. Class Participation (20%)**

The course depends on active and ongoing participation by all class participants. This will occur in three ways:

* + Participation begins with effective reading. Class participants are expected to read and discuss the readings on a weekly basis. That means coming prepared to engage the class, with questions and/or comments with respect to the reading. Students are expected to have completed all the required readings before class to the point where they can be called on to critique or discuss any reading.
  + In class itself, the key to quality class discussions is listening. Asking good questions is the second key element. “What did you mean by that?” “How do you/we know?” “What’s the evidence for that claim?” Be reflective, thoughtful, and fully engage with the ideas of others in the class. Students should share thoughts and reactions in ways that promote critical engagement with their classmates. While engaging, remember the classroom agreements. Discussion topics will often be very personal, sensitive, and even controversial. Being respectful of everyone’s opinion is essential to creating a safe and engaged learning environment.

* + There will also be regular classroom exercises and case discussions. For students who are less comfortable engaging during class, I encourage students to take full advantage of the forums on NYU Brightspace. Forums are a great way to add to the participation grade and remain engaged in the conversation throughout the week. Participation in class exercises, discussions, and forums all go into the participation grade.

Quality and quantity of participation can be, but are not necessarily, closely correlated.

**2. Writing Assignments (40%)**

Effective, strategic communicators are effective writers and strategists. There are **four** individual writing assignments for the course:

**a.  Tell Your Story (10%)**

Tell your story in **500 words** based on the concepts of storytelling and narrative we covered in the first class. Be sure to refer to the PowerPoint presentation in order to craft a compelling biography. **Assignment is due by 5:00pm on Tuesday, September 14.**

**b.  What’s Your G.A.M.E. Plan? (10%)**

Strategic communications are just that – strategic! Students must select a topic, issue, or cause that piques their interests and create an outreach plan and strategy using The Lightbox Collaborative worksheet, The G.A.M.E. Plan. Identify a communications goal. Craft 5 VPSA messages for 5 different targeted audience(s) and select 5 messengers and methods or platforms needed to engage them. (This is a great opportunity to get feedback on any current or potential projects.) **Assignment is due by 5:00pm on Tuesday, September 21.**

**c.  Story of Self, Us, and Now (10%)**

This is a **500-word** exercise in which student will revisit the Tell Your Story assignment and re-write it using Marshall Ganz’s Public Narrative model of the Story of Self, Story of Us, and Story of Now. Students must reflect on who they are, what community or communities they come from, and the current socio-political moment to craft a compelling narrative. **Assignment is due by 5:00pm on Tuesday, September 28.**

**d. Video Response: What’s Your Final G.A.M.E. Plan Response? (10%)**

Now that you’ve learned how to craft your story, create targeted messaging, and tell a systemic story for advocacy, it’s time to practice how do you respond to your opposition in real-time. **Record your VPSA in response to a Discussion Thread on Brightspace**using thecommunications tools learned thus far.**Assignment is due by 5:00pm on Tuesday, October 5.**

**3. Final Group Project and Group Presentation (40%)**

This is the culmination of all of the course learnings. **Assignment is due by 5:00pm on Tuesday, October 26.**

**a.  Final Project (20%)**

The final project is a comprehensive strategic communications plan to be completed in groups. Students must use the Rasmuson Foundation’s strategic communications template as a guide and provide a written accompaniment to the communications plan such as an op-ed, LTE, or press release.

**b. Final Presentation (20%)**

This is a 5-minute presentation that each group will perform in front of the class. The final presentations must enact and reflect the strategic communications plan the groups created. Students are encouraged to be creative and glean from examples used throughout the course.

**Late Policy**

Papers handed in late will be penalized one-third of a grade per day.

**Grading Breakdown**

Class participation (20%), Writing Assignments (40%), Final Project and Presentation (40%).

**Class Readings**

**Required Books**

* George Lakoff, *(ALL NEW)* *Don’t Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*
* Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*

**Recommended Books**

* Dr. Frank Lutz, *Words That Work*
* The Center for Story-Based Strategy, *Re:Imagining Change*[NYU Brightspace]

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner’s Academic Code](https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies/code). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies/academic-oath). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

**Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities.  Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) website](https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-with-disabilities.html) **and click the “Get Started” button. You can also call or email CSD**(212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

**NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays**

[NYU’s Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

**NYU’s Wellness Exchange**

[NYU’s Wellness Exchange](http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/wellness-exchange.html) has extensive student health and mental health resources. A private hotline (212-443-9999) is available 24/7 that connects students with a professional who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns.

**Overview of the Semester**

**WEEK 1  September 7 STORYTELLING AND NARRATIVE**

**WEEK 2 September 14 VALUES, FRAMING, AND MESSAGING**

**WEEK 3 September 21 SHIFTING NARRATIVE**

**WEEK 4 September 28 TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS**

**WEEK 5 October 5 INCORPORATING PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH**

**WEEK 6 October 19 STORY-BASED STRATEGY**

**WEEK 7  October 26 FINAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND PROJECTS DUE**

**Weekly Course Readings**

**WEEK 1: STORYTELLING AND NARRATIVE**

**Required:**

* Jamila Brown. [Beyond Resistance](https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/beyond-resistance/our-new-global-feminism-fellow-considers-whats-next), Bitch Magazine. January 16, 2018

**Recommended:**

* Grace Fleming. [How to Write a Personal Narrative](https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-write-a-personal-narrative-1856809), ThoughtCo. August 2, 2019.
* Jasmine Somaiah. [Storytelling for Advocacy](https://callhub.io/storytelling-for-advocacy/), CallHub. September 24, 2018.
* Joseph E. Davis. Narrative and Social Movements: The Power of Stories. [NYU Brightspace]

**WEEK 2: VALUES, MESSAGING, AND FRAMING**

**Required:**

* George Lakoff. *(ALL NEW) Don’t Think an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate.*
* The Opportunity Agenda, Vision, Values, Voice: A Communications Toolkit, 2015. [NYU Brightspace]

**Recommended:**

* Simon Sinek. “[How Great Leaders Inspire Action](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action),” TEDTalks, September 2009.[NYU Brightspace]
* Marshall Ganz and Liz McKenna. [The Practice of Social Movement Leadership](https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/2017/06/23/the-practice-of-social-movement-leadership/). [NYU Brightspace]

**WEEK 3: SHIFTING NARRATIVE**

**Required:**

* Malcolm Gladwell. *Tipping Point*–Chapters 1-5.
* Marshall Ganz. Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power. [NYU Brightspace]

**Recommended:**

* Anat Shenkur-Osorio: [Brave New Words](https://wordstowinby-pod.com/) podcast

**WEEK 4: TRADITIONAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS**

**Required:**

* Marshall Freelon, Charlton D. Mcilwain, and Meredith D. Clark. *Beyond the Hashtags,*Center for Media and Social Impact. American University. [NYU Brightspace]

**Recommended:**

* The Rockefeller Foundation, Digital Storytelling for Social Impact [NYU Brightspace]

**WEEK 5: INCORPORATING PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH**

**Required:**

* Robert Pérez and Amy Simon. *Heartwired: Human Behavior, Strategic Opinion Research, and the Audacious Pursuit of Social Change*. [NYU Brightspace]

**Recommended:**

* The Opportunity Agenda, *Vision, Values, Voice: Communications Toolkit*, Pages 10-12. [NYU Brightspace]
* Dr. Frank Lutz. *Words That Work.*

**WEEK 6: STORY-BASED STRATEGY**

**Required:**

* Story-Based Strategy 101 [NYU Brightspace]
* Jamila Brown. [Stories of Survival in the Diaspora](https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/blog-full/2021/7/13/stories-of-survival-in-the-diaspora). Center for Story-Based Strategy. July 13, 2021.

**Recommended:**

* The Center for Story-Based Strategy, *Re:Imagining Change* [NYU Brightspace]

**WEEK 7: FINAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS AND PROJECTS**

**Required:**

* The Rasmuson Foundation. Strategic Communications Template. [NYU Brightspace]