

PADM-GP 4137 \* EXEC-GP 4137

**Communications and Branding for Nonprofits Spring 2024**

# Instructor Information

* Barbara Brancaccio
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* Emails and calls will be returned within one business day
* Office Hours: After class sessions or by appointment. Please schedule in advance.

# Course Information

* Class Meeting Times: Saturdays, 9:00-10:40am, 2/3, 2/17, 3/2, 3/16, 4/6, 4/20, 5/4
* Class Location: Bobst Library, 70 Washington Square S, LL142

# Course Prerequisites

* There are no prerequisites for this course.

# Course Description

An organization’s brand can help it raise money, create change, and recruit participants as it effectively communicates its mission. But a brand is more than just a logo or a memorized elevator pitch, it is the way both internal and external audiences perceive your organization— and shaping this perception is as essential to the success of nonprofit and public organizations as it is to for-profit organizations. And since many nonprofits have limited staff and financial resources available for communications activities, it is even more important that these resources be deployed as strategically as possible. This course will offer an overview of branding and communications concepts, helping students approach communications in a way that builds

commitment to their organization’s mission, increases trust, creates ambassadors, and strengthens impact. Students will gain a basic familiarity with a variety of branding principles and develop strategic communication recommendations for an organization they are familiar with.

# Course and Learning Objectives

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

1. Understand how a brand is a key driver for an organization’s mission and informs communications strategy.
2. Define positioning and personality for a nonprofit organization and apply these tools to make decisions around an organization’s brand and communications channels.
3. Apply best practices for managing communications.
4. Identify the elements of a strategic communications framework.
5. Produce strategic recommendations for an organization, movement, or campaign.

**Learning Assessment Table**

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| --- | --- |
| **Graded Assignment** | **Course Objective Covered** |
| Organization Overview worksheet | #1 |
| Brand Strategy worksheet | #2 |
| Audience Profile worksheet | #2, #3 |
| Case study worksheet | #5 |
| Final memo | #1-#7 |

# Required Readings

* + All readings and materials for each session, can be found online and are listed under each class below.
  + For each session, there will be required readings and optional ones offered.
  + There are no required textbooks for this course.
  + You will select and purchase the studies via links noted in session 5.

**Participation and Attendance**

Class attendance and preparation are critical. All of us bring different perceptions and ideas to this dialogue about strategic communications. Please come to the first class ready to discuss the assigned reading, and prepare for each class by immersing yourself in the assignments. Each student will have the opportunity to lead the group in discussion based on the reading and concepts learned in class. Our sessions will be interactive and I expect that you’ll be ready to share your insights and engage one another in an open and comfortable atmosphere.

As your instructor, I will happily share my knowledge and experience, but I see myself as a facilitator. This course is for the student who wants to engage with the material and each other. Class participation is important and will count toward your overall grade. If speaking in public is difficult for you, please let me know early on.

Notetaking during class is encouraged. You will also have access to all slides and presentation materials used throughout the course. However, audio and video recording, as well as AI notetaking and writing platforms, are not permitted.

**Since we are only meeting for seven sessions, you are required to attend every class and arrive on time.** If you are not able to attend a class:

* + Notify me beforehand via email.
  + If there is an assignment due on a date you are absent from class, it is still due at the beginning of class unless you are granted an extension. Extensions will be granted only in case of emergency, out of respect for those who abide by deadlines despite hectic schedules. (See *late submission policy* below.)
  + If you'd like to maintain a high participation grade, you are welcome to submit an optional reflection paper on one of the readings due for the class you miss before the next time we meet two weeks later.
  + Please review the slides and resources I post after class sessions and ask me or a classmate any questions about the material we cover.

# Assessment Assignments and Evaluation

For your assignments, you will need to select a nonprofit or public sector organization, movement, or campaign to serve as your case study. You can pick an organization you are already connected to, one that you admire, or even one you just learned about. While you can do the assignments without talking to an actual organization, connecting with a staff person there will make your projects better. If you need help selecting an organization, let me know after our first session.

## Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

1. Class attendance and participation: 25%
2. Worksheets: 40%
   1. Organization Overview: 10%
   2. Brand Strategy: 10%
   3. Audience Profile: 10%
   4. Case Study answers: 10%
3. Final memo: 35%

## Grading Rubric

I will evaluate your work on the quality of your insights and your ability to demonstrate that you have processed the readings and reflected on our class discussions. I expect your projects to be organized and thoughtful. Your projects should be well written and reflect professional quality in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and clarity.

## Worksheets

* 10: Excellent: sets an example for others to follow
* 8: Very Good: clearly understands concepts
* 6: Good: basic grasp of concepts
* 4: Marginal: missing some of the concepts
* 2: Unacceptable/poor: doesn’t understand most or all of the concepts
* 0: Not submitted

## Final memo

* **WRITING (25%):** The writing is fluid; sentences/paragraphs are well structured; proper grammar; shows a command of graduate-level vocabulary and understanding of concepts; polished, not drafty.
* **PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION (10%):** Correct spelling/no typos; length limits honored (if given); timeliness and other instructions followed.
* **ANALYTICAL THINKING (25%):** Uses material from class to develop and support ideas; demonstrates an effort to integrate materials; paper has a logical flow that presents and develops a clear, unified position/argument; the argument is consistent (no contradictions or gaps) and based on critical thinking.
* **RECOMMENDATIONS (30%):** Reflects realities of nonprofit organization’s resources, mission, and community; applies insights to a practical discussion of strategic communications.
* **REFERENCES (10%):** Uses and cites references appropriately. You can use ANY reference system of your choice, as long as you are consistent

## Participation

I will use this rubric when calculating your participation grade:

* 23-25%: “A” Level Participation
  + Attends all classes. If late, sends an email to the professor ahead of time.
  + Frequently contributes to class conversation (roughly once or twice per class in- person as well as in the forums).
  + Comments are clear, succinct, and relevant to the current conversation.
  + Is prepared for class, as evidenced by:
    - providing substantive responses
    - applying ideas from the readings to the discussion
    - challenging or extending ideas in the readings; and
    - integrating or contrasting ideas from current readings with previous readings
* 20-22%: “B” Level Participation
  + Misses one class. May not send an email to the professor ahead of time.
  + Infrequently contributes to class conversation in sessions or in the forums.
  + Comments are sometimes unclear, long-winded, or not relevant to the discussion.
  + Is less prepared for class (see above).
* 17-19%: “C” Level Participation
  + Misses two classes. Doesn’t email the professor ahead of time.
  + Arrives late more than once.
  + Rarely contributes to class conversation in sessions or in the forums.
  + Is unprepared for class (see above).

## Late Submission Policy for Assignments

Extensions will be granted only in case of emergency, out of respect to those who abide by deadlines despite equally hectic schedules. Late submissions without prior permission will be penalized by a letter grade per day (e.g. B+ to B).

1. Assignments are due before 9:00 am on the dates indicated on NYU classes.
2. Extensions on assignments will be granted only in case of emergency or special circumstances. This policy is adopted out of respect to those who abide by deadlines despite equally demanding schedules.

# Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as per Wagner’s grading policy.

# Overview of the Semester

* + Class 1, February 3
    - Topic: Understanding strategic communication and defining branding
    - Deliverable: Assignment 1 due at 9 am on February 17.
  + Class 2, February 17
    - Topic: Setting goals, identifying stakeholders and engaging audiences
    - Deliverable: Assignment 2 due at 9 am on March 2.
  + Class 3, March 2
    - Topic: Brand strategy and identity – who are we, what do we stand for, what are we communicating?
    - Deliverable: Assignment 3 due at 9 am on March 16.
  + Class 4, March 16
    - Topic: Brand experience and brand architecture
    - Deliverable: Assignment 4 due at 9 am on April 6.
  + Class 5, April 6
    - Topic: Making real-life brand and communications decisions
  + Class 6, April 20
    - Topic: Building a communications campaign
  + Class 7, May 4
    - Topic: Final Class - Internal communications, strong teams, and developing plans
    - Deliverable: Final assignment due at 9 am on May 11.

# Detailed Course Overview

## SESSION 1 (February 3): UNDERSTANDING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND DEFINING BRANDING

### Readings Due

* + “How Nonprofits Can Use a SWOT Analysis” by Kristen Hay (2017)
  + “The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector” by Nathalie Kylander & Christopher Stone (2012)
  + “Building a brand for social change” by Ally Dommu (2018)
  + “Why Nonprofit Branding is Different from Other Companies— and Why It Matters” by Deroy Peraza (2022)
  + Blog: “[The Ultimate Guide to Strong Nonprofit Communications](file:///C:\Users\barbarabrancaccio\Desktop\●%09https:\philanthropycircuit.org\blog\the-ultimate-guide-to-strong-nonprofit-communications#:~:text=1%201%29%20Determine%20Overarching%20Goals%20Good%20communication%20exists,a%20Story%20...%208%208%29%20Lead%20the%20Conversation)” by Philanthropy Circuit (2002)
  + “Nonprofit Communications vs. Marketing, Fundraising and Storytelling” by Alyssa Conrardy (2022)

#### Recommended Reading

* + “Marketing & Communications in Nonprofit Organizations” by David Williamson (2009)
  + “Branding for Non Profit Organizations: The Definitive Guide” by Melissa Kovach (2022)
  + “Top 5 Nonprofit Branding Mistakes” by Ida Persson (2021)

### Assignment

Complete Worksheet #1: Organization Overview. Please select an organization, campaign, or movement to profile throughout the course. Submit the worksheet responses in the Assignments section and be ready to share your initial ideas during class. **Due 9:00 am on Saturday, February 17.**

## SESSION 2 (February 17): SETTING GOALS, IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS AND ENGAGING AUDIENCES

### Readings Due

* + [“Who Are Stakeholders and Why Do They Matter?”](https://nonprofitquarterly.org/who-are-stakeholders-and-why-do-they-matter/) by Elizabeth A. Castillo
  + “How to engage your community in your brand “ by Ally Dommu (2022)
  + “Four simple frameworks to prioritize your audiences” by K Yin (2022)
  + “Encourage inclusion and equity at your organization with SMARTIE goals” by NTEN/The Management Center (2018)
  + “Creating an inclusive and equitable research process” by Ally Dommu (2019)
  + Blog: [“Nonprofit Communications Strategy: A Step-by-Step Guide”](https://blog.elevationweb.org/nonprofit-communications-strategy-a-step-by-step-guide-elevationweb) by Ronita Mohan (2023)

#### Recommended Reading

* + “5 Ways To Use Your Audience Persona To Tell A Better Story” by Vanessa Chase
  + “Inclusive branding” by Chris Tuttle (2019)

## Assignment

Complete Worksheet #2: Branding Strategy. Submit the worksheet responses in the Assignments section and be ready to share your strategy during class. **Due 9:00 am on Saturday, March 2.**

## SESSION 3 (March 2): BRAND STRATEGY AND IDENTITY – WHO ARE WE, WHAT DO WE STAND FOR, WHAT ARE WE COMMUNICATING?

### Readings Due

* + Video: “How Great Leaders Inspire Action” (TED talk) by Simon Sinek (2009)
  + “Messaging considerations for a movement” by Hannah Thomas (2020)
  + “The Eight-Word Mission Statement” by Kevin Starr (2012)
  + “The case for a boring elevator pitch” by Dan Gunderman (2019)
  + “Using your brand strategy every day in everything” by Sarah Durham (2017)
  + “[20 Inspirational Nonprofit Vision Statement Examples](https://blog.elevationweb.org/nonprofit-vision-statements)” by Sarah Henry (2019)
  + “[Nonprofit Taglines: The Art of Effective Brevity](https://nonprofitquarterly.org/nonprofit-taglines-the-art-of-effective-brevity/)” by NP Quarterly (2008)

#### Recommended Reading

* + “An Emotional Connection Matters More than Customer Satisfaction” by Alan Zorfas and Daniel Leemon (2016)
  + How to inclusively shape your organization's voice” by Hannah Thomas (2020)
  + “Be more ethical when you use images. Here’s how.” by Claire Taylor Hansen (2022)
  + “The power of illustration: branding, storytelling and its impact” by Raffi Marhaba and Sandy Zimmerman (2022)
  + “How this nonprofit’s reimagined brand helps it serve its mission” by Adele Peters (2018)

### Assignment

Complete Worksheet #3: Audience Profile. Submit the worksheet responses in the Assignments section and be ready to share your analysis during class. **Due 9:00 am on Saturday, March 16.**

## SESSION 4 (March 16): BRAND EXPERIENCE AND BRAND ARCHITECTURE

### Readings Due

* + “The importance of creating a good experience with your brand online and beyond” by Sarah Durham and Farra Trompeter (2020)
  + Excerpt: "What is Driving the Paradigm Shift and Brand Idea Framework," [The Brand Idea](https://ssir.org/books/excerpts/entry/the_brand_idea_managing_nonprofit_brands_with_integrity_democracy_and_affin) by Nathalie Laidler-Klander & Julia Shepard Stenzel (2014)
  + “[Craft Effective Nonprofit Brand Architecture](https://hivo.co/blog/crafting-an-effective-nonprofit-brand-architecture#:~:text=Brand%20architecture%20refers%20to%20the%20strategic%20organization%20and,elements%20of%20an%20organization%27s%20brand%20identity%20are%20structured.)” by Hivo (2023)
  + [“9 Effective Nonprofit Communications Strategies to Follow in 2023](https://www.instrumentl.com/blog/effective-nonprofit-communication-strategies)” by Instrumentl (2023)
  + “[How to Build a Nonprofit Communications Strategy](https://www.anedot.com/blog/nonprofit-communication-strategy)” by Evan Moncada (2023)

#### Recommended Reading

* + Brand architecture: Strategies to strengthen your nonprofit’s family of programs, events, and initiatives (ebook) by Big Duck (2017)
  + “When you know you’ve got a brand architecture problem: an exercise” by Claire Taylor Hansen (2018)
  + “[The 5 Steps You Need for Strong Nonprofit Communications](https://gettingattention.org/nonprofit-communications/)” by Getting Attention

### Assignment

Complete Worksheet #4: Case Study. Please purchase the case studies and read at least three of the following case studies and then submit answers to a set of questions for one of them. Submit the worksheet responses in the Assignments section and be ready to share your analysis during class. **Due 9:00 am on Saturday, April 6.**

You can purchase the coursepack at the Harvard Business Publishing site: <https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/1131474>

* + Marketing New York City” by V. Kasturi Rangan, Anita Elberse (2008)
  + “Social Media and the Planned Parenthood/ Susan G. Komen for the Cure Controversy” by Laura Winig, Archon Fung (2012)
  + “Commonwealth Shakespeare Company: To Be, or Not To Be, Digital is the Question” by Clare Gillan Huang (2020)
  + “The Wellness Institute: To Brand or Not to Brand” by Sara Penner (2019)
  + “Educo: Brand and Strategy in the Nonprofit Sector” by Xavier Oliver and Isaac Sastre Boquet (2021)

## SESSION 5 (April 6): MAKING REAL-LIFE BRAND AND COMMUNICATIONS DECISIONS

### Case Studies For Review

* + Marketing New York City” by V. Kasturi Rangan, Anita Elberse (2008)
  + “Social Media and the Planned Parenthood/ Susan G. Komen for the Cure Controversy” by Laura Winig, Archon Fung (2012)
  + “Commonwealth Shakespeare Company: To Be, or Not To Be, Digital is the Question” by Clare Gillan Huang (2020)
  + “The Wellness Institute: To Brand or Not to Brand” by Sara Penner (2019)
  + “Educo: Brand and Strategy in the Nonprofit Sector” by Xavier Oliver and Isaac Sastre Boquet (2021)

### No Assignment due.

## SESSION 6 (April 20): BUILDING A COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

### Readings Due

* + “Use campaigns to build mindshare and engagement” by Sarah Durham (2022)
  + “Stop Raising Awareness Already” by Ann Christiano and Annie Neimand (2017)
  + “You can build a strong concept for your campaign in six steps. Here's how.” by Claire Taylor Hansen (2022)
  + Aspirational Communication by Doug Hattaway (2020)
  + “[Campaign School Handbook: Building a Communications Strategy *Tactics Tools and Techniques for Reaching Your Audiences*](https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Module%208_Building%20a%20Communications%20Strategy_EN.pdf)*”* by National Democratic Institute (2015)
  + “A multi-media campaign from Black Feminist Future responds to attacks on reproductive rights in the US” by Olivia Hingley (2022)
  + “Social Media for Nonprofits: A Comprehensive Guide” by Adele Streissguth (2022)

#### Recommended Reading

* + Using brand personality to guide your presence on social media by Ryan Gerhardt (2020)
  + “A Chorus for Wildlife: How World Wildlife Fund helped organize a global clarion call to stop wildlife crime.” by Carter Roberts & Steve Ertel (2016)
  + “What is Nonprofit Marketing? 8 Ways to Boost Online Efforts” by Lauren Pope (2022)
  + “Doing Better On Racial Justice: A Framework For Brands And Nonprofits” by David Hessekiel (2020)
  + “The real reason your organization isn’t well-known” by Sarah Durham (2017)
  + “Social Media in Government: Benefits, Challenges, and How it's Used” by Claire Beveridge and Tony Tran (2022)
  + “Where Nonprofits Spend Their Time On Social Media in 2022” by Martina Bretous (2022)

### No Assignment due.

## SESSION 7 (May 4): INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS, STRONG TEAMS, AND DEVELOPING PLANS

### Readings Due

* + “The Back-of-the-Envelope Guide to Communications Strategy” by Ann Christiano and Annie Neimand (2017)
  + “It’s time for your nonprofit to prioritize internal communications” by Farra Trompeter (2022)
  + “Developing the mission of your communications team” by Laura Fisher (2019)
  + “4 steps to more powerful communications” by Elizabeth Ricca (2017)

#### Recommended Reading

* + “MOCHA model” by The Management Center
  + “Internal communications: elements to include in your nonprofit’s plan” by Meg Shannon (2016)
  + “What Goes Into A Nonprofit Marketing And Communications Plan Or Strategy?” by Kivi Leroux-Miller (2019)
  + “What can the right communications staff really do for your nonprofit?” by Sarah Durham (2017)
  + “The best communications tools for nonprofits — internal and external” by Meredith Esquivel

### Assignment

#### Submit a 4-5 page Final Memo proposing the strategic framework and communications recommendations for your selected organization. **Due 9 am on Saturday, May 11.**

# Additional resources

Nonprofit Marketing Guide

The Ethical Rainmaker Podcast

The Hub - Community-Centric Fundraising Nonprofits Are Messy

We Are For Good Podcast Nonprofit Tech for Good Radical Communicators Network NTEN

Nonprofit Nation with Julia Campbell Nonprofit Hub

Power Station

# NYU Brightspace

All announcements, resources, and assignments will be delivered through the NYU Brightspace. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with advance notice provided as soon as possible through the course website. Also, I will occasionally send emails about course details, including possible guest speakers and logistics, to your NYU email account. *Please check both the course website and your NYU email account regularly.*

# 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. All Wagner students have already read and signed the Wagner 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 Student Accessibility

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) website and click the “Get Started” button. You can also call or email CSD (212-998-4980 or 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 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 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.