Strategic Communication
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

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Office Hours: Please schedule with the professor at least 24 hours before you wish to meet. Note that emails will be responded to within 48 hours of receiving them; email is the best way to get in touch.

Location: GCASL, Room 269

Time: 6:45-8:25 pm; we will have one ten minute break.

COURSE GOAL
In New York City there are currently 15,000 nonprofits, and over 1.5 million in the United States that account for more than $1 trillion in revenues annually. The nonprofit sector is now the third largest industry in the country. Indeed, some of the largest employers in New York City are nonprofits: Mount Sinai Medical Center, New York Presbyterian, and yes, NYU.

Much is expected of the non profit sector. Not only to provide the basic necessities of life, but also to tackle complex issues like public education reform, reforming the juvenile justice system, and court simplification. In addition, the sector is called upon to tackle issues that government cannot address or is not willing to address, and to do it – typically – with fewer resources. Thanks to the current economic landscape, marked by slow recovery and severely reduced public dollars, non profits face significant challenges as they attempt to live up to these expectations.

In this swirl nonprofits compete for resources, participants, and broader change. This is where strategic communication comes in. Some questions we will consider:

- What is the value of communications for nonprofits?
- What tools, tactics and strategies do nonprofits need in order to successfully communicate?
- How can a nonprofit effectively craft a communications strategy, and what do effective communications “look like?”
- What can a nonprofit do to prepare for a communications crisis?

This class will bridge theory and practice through our readings and activities.

COURSE FORMAT
This will be an active class. The instructor has knowledge and experience to impart, but very much sees herself as a facilitator. Lecturing will be kept to a minimum. In the course, we will read books, articles and documents and discuss them. Be ready to do so.
You will be expected to engage one another and all guest speakers as active members of our class. This course is not for the student who wants to receive information and then simply present it back. This course is for the student who wants to engage with the material and each other. Class participation is therefore vital and will count toward your overall grade (see next section). Get to know your classmates as the journey in this work is better understood and enjoyed by shared experience.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
There are three major components for this course.

1. Class participation. Class attendance and preparation are critical. All of us bring different perceptions and ideas to this dialogue about strategic communications. Please prepare for each class by immersing yourself in the assignments, and be ready to provide an open and comfortable atmosphere in which to share comments and participate.

2. Mid-term paper. You will be presented with a communications scenario in which you will be asked to respond. The mid-term project will be in the form of a memo from you, an Executive Director of a new human services non-profit to your Board Chair. In this memo, you will outline a start up communications strategy and plan of action to implement the strategy.

3. Final: You will be provided with a hypothetical scenario revealing a serious communications crisis for a nonprofit organization. In the role of communications consultant you must articulate a meaningful short- and long-term response to the crisis.

In crafting these writing projects, drawing from your own experience is fine, however you are expected to synthesize core ideas from all readings, and cite relevant examples. Along with the content of the papers, they will also be graded for clarity and sharpness of the ideas articulated.

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:
Class attendance and participation: 40%
Mid Term paper: 20%
Final: 40%

COURSE READINGS:

Durham, Brandraising: How Nonprofits Raise Visibility and Money through Smart Communications

Bonk, et. al, Strategic Communications for Nonprofits: A Step-by-Step Guide to Working With the Media

Additional readings and videos are listed below and are all available on the internet. These additional readings and videos are essential to comprehending the class.
Finally, you are urged to stay on top of current events by reading the New York Times. There will be topical events that will contribute to the richness of the class discussion. We will use them and you are expected to be aware of them.

**TECHNOLOGY POLICY:** Please refrain from the use of all technology during class, this includes but is not limited to: laptops, telephones, and iPads.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Any students requiring accommodations should contact me to make proper arrangements. Please be prepared to share your documentation from the NYU disabilities office regarding appropriate accommodations.

**October 24 –**

Topic – Introduction and Overview

Assignments:
Read: “Marketing and Communications in Nonprofit Organizations” by David Williamson at [http://cpnl.georgetown.edu/doc_pool/Marketing.pdf](http://cpnl.georgetown.edu/doc_pool/Marketing.pdf)


Read: *Brandraising*, Chapters 1-3

Visit and compare: [http://www.drugpolicy.org/](http://www.drugpolicy.org/)

Visit and compare: [www.unitedwaynyc.org](http://www.unitedwaynyc.org)
[www.robinhood.org](http://www.robinhood.org)

**October 31 –**

Topic – Making a movie for a cause

Assignments: [http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/sites/default/files/docs_on_a_mission.pdf](http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/sites/default/files/docs_on_a_mission.pdf)

Watch: Documentary movie - TBA

Begin following New York City local news carefully today (see assignment due on 11/07)

**November 7 –**

Topic – The brand and the message – what are we communicating?

Assignments:
Read:  Brandraising, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5
       Strategic Communications for Nonprofits, Chapter 1

“The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector,” Stanford Social Innovation Review,
Kylander & Stone, Spring 2012
http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/the_role_of_brand_in_the_nonprofit_sector

“Swedes’ Twitter Voice: Anyone Saying Almost (Blush) Anything” at
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/11/world/europe/many-voices-of-sweden-via-twitter.html?_r=1
“@ThisisVT Vermonsters Taking Turns on Twitter” at

Watch: http://www.ted.com/talks/dave_meslin_the_antidote_to_apathy.html

Write: Having begun following New York City news on 10/31 hand in – and be ready to share in
class – one week worth of tweets as if you had been handed the responsibility of the City’s
Twitter account. This means a minimum total of seven tweets (one per day). Again, please be
prepared to share your work with the class and hand it in to the professor.

November 14 -

Topic – Identities and Branding Case Studies

Assignments:
Read:  “Amnesty International: Branding an Organization that is also a Movement” at
Visit:  http://www.amnesty.org/en
Read:  Embracing DNA, Expanding Horizons: The Panda Turns Fifty at
Visit:  http://www.earthhour.org/
       https://www.arctichome.com/
Read:  Brandraising, Chapter 6
       Strategic Communications, Chapter 2

Find on line: Your favorite nonprofit logo, be prepared to share the image with the class (print it
and bring in the organization’s URL for the professor to display), and explain why you think the
logo “works.”

November 14 - MIDTERM assignment due in class.

Topic – Strategic Communications in Action

Assignments:
Read:  Brandraising, Chapter 7
Strategic Communications, Chapter 9
“The Girl Effect Brand: Using Brand Democracy to Strengthen Brand Affinity” at

Visit: www.girleffect.org
Visit: http://girlhub.squarespace.com/about/
Visit: www.girlup.org

November 21

Topic – Tactics and Evaluation: Annual reports, brochures, websites, social media, what works?

Assignments:
Visit: http://nonprofitannualreports.wikispaces.com/
Read: “Are We There Yet: A Media Evaluation Guide” at http://www.mediaevaluationproject.org/AreWeThereYet.pdf

Pick up a nonprofit brochure that you find either compelling or awful. Be prepared to share with the class why you selected the brochure.

Identify your most favorite nonprofit website and your least favorite, write a one page statement on why you chose each. Be prepared to discuss your thoughts.

November 28

Topic – Crisis Communications

Assignments:
Read: Strategic Communications, Chapter 7
Read: “Planned Parenthood’s Social Media Magic” at http://philanthropy.com/article/Planned-Parenthood-s/131981/
Read: “When Scandal is Outsourced” at
Read: “Managers Pushed for Fake Job Placement Figures” at
Read: “Fraud Found in Jobs Effort; Blow to Bloomberg” at

December 5 –

Topic – Real life communications – Jenny Sedlis, Director of External Affairs, Harlem Success Academy

Assignments:
Visit: http://www.successacademies.org/page.cfm?p=1
Read: TBA

December 12 – FINAL Due to professor via email.