NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

PADM-GP 4137
Strategic Communications for Nonprofit and Public Managers

Meeting Times
10:50am-12:30pm on Saturdays Sept 10, 24, Oct 8, 22, Nov 5, 19, Dec 10 | Bobst Library – LL1 – Room 38

Course Instructor
Farra Trompeter

Contact Information
• Best way to reach me is via email: farra@nyu.edu or work: 718-705-8092
• Emails and calls will be returned within one business day
• Office hours: 9:40-10:40am before class sessions or by appointment; please schedule in advance
• Please call me Farra 😊

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.

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

1. Understand how brand can act as the driver to an organization’s overall 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. Explain the elements of a strategic framework and use it make better decisions.
5. Produce strategic recommendations to for an organization, movement, or campaign.

Course Requirements
• There are no prerequisites for this course.
• For your projects, you will need to select a nonprofit or public sector organization, movement, or campaign to serve as your case study. You can pick something you are already connected to or something you admire. 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 by our second session.
• You will purchase one case study ($4.25) to discuss during our fifth session.
Participation and Attendance

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.

As your instructor, I will happily share my knowledge and experience, but I see myself as a facilitator. Our sessions will be interactive and I expect that you'll be ready to share your insights from the readings and engage one another in discussion. 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.*

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 due to an emergency, you must notify me beforehand. 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. Late submissions without prior permission will be penalized by ½ a letter grade per day (eg B+ to B).

Grading

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Class attendance and participation: 20%

Worksheets: 40%

- Case study: 10%
- Brand refinement worksheet: 20%
- Audience profile: 10%

Memo: 40%

I will also grade you in accordance to Wagner’s grading guidelines, available for your review at [https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/admissions/GradingGuidelines.pdf](https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/admissions/GradingGuidelines.pdf).

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. I will use the following criteria when grading your projects, particularly the memo and plan:

- **WRITING (25%)**: The writing is fluid; sentences/paragraphs are well structured; proper grammar; shows 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 effort to integrate materials; paper has a logical flow that presents and develops a clear, unified position/argument; 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.
I will use this rubric when calculating your participation grade:

18-20%: “A” Level Participation

- Attends all classes. If late, sends email to professor ahead of time.
- Frequently contributes to class conversation (roughly once or twice per class). Note: offering input does not mean you will always be called upon.
- 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.

16-17%: “B” Level Participation

- Misses one class. May not send email to professor ahead of time.
- Rarely contributes to class conversation.
- Comments are sometimes unclear, long-winded, or not relevant to discussion.
- Is less prepared for class (see above).

14-15%: “C” Level Participation

- Misses two classes. Doesn’t email professor ahead of time.
- Arrives late more than once.
- Rarely contributes to class conversation.
- Is unprepared for class (see above).

Incompletes and Academic Integrity

This course will abide by the Wagner School’s general policy guidelines on incomplete grades, academic honesty, and plagiarism. 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.

The Wagner School has a strict policy regarding incompletes. The grade of “Incomplete Pass” will only be available in extreme circumstances such as serious medical emergencies. Students may withdraw from the course up until the date set by the Registrar. Students who withdraw will receive a grade of W and will have to pay for the course again when they retake it. [http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/incompletes](http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/incompletes)

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating, forgery, plagiarism and collusion in dishonest acts undermine the Wagner School’s educational mission and your own personal and intellectual growth. You are expected to bear individual responsibility for your work and to uphold the ideal of academic integrity. Any student who compromises or devalues the academic process will be reported to the administration and be subject to disciplinary action. [http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies](http://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies) and [https://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/academic-code.php](https://wagner.nyu.edu/students/policies/academic-code.php)

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.

Course Website

The course website can be found on NYU’s Classes system, accessible via the Academics tab on NYU Home ([http://newclasses.nyu.edu/](http://newclasses.nyu.edu/)). Throughout the semester, I will post documents such as lecture slides and supplemental resources. In addition, I will occasionally send emails about course details and logistics to your NYU email account. Please check both the course website and your NYU email account on a regular basis.
Course Schedule

Session 1: September 10  Introduction | Understanding strategic communication and defining Brandraising

Read/watch before class:

- *Brandraising*, chapters 1-3
- "Marketing and Communications in Nonprofit Organizations" by David Williamson (2009)
- "The Case for Communications: How smart, strategic communications can help nonprofits and foundations win."

Assignment: Respond to student survey (link will be sent before first class)

Session 2: September 24  The brand’s big idea and personality – what are we communicating?

Read before class:

- *Brandraising*, chapters 4-5
- “Positioning: Why you should define your nonprofit’s big idea” by Dan Gunderman (2014) [http://www.bigducknyc.com/what-is-your-organizations-big-idea](http://www.bigducknyc.com/what-is-your-organizations-big-idea)
- “The language of values” by Dan Gunderman (2016) [http://www.bigducknyc.com/express-nonprofit-team-values](http://www.bigducknyc.com/express-nonprofit-team-values)
- “5 tips for thinking creatively about nonprofit identity” by Rebecca Hume (2012) [http://www.bigducknyc.com/dont_let_your_logo_trip_you_up](http://www.bigducknyc.com/dont_let_your_logo_trip_you_up)

Assignments: Submit case study organization overview worksheet (document available on NYU Classes). Also, review this list ([http://topnonprofits.com/examples/vision-statements/](http://topnonprofits.com/examples/vision-statements/)) and pick your favorite. Come ready to explain why.

Session 3: October 8  The experience of the brand and rolling it out

Read before class:

- *Brandraising*, chapter 6-7

Assignment: Submit brand refinement worksheet (document will be available on NYU Classes)

Session 4: October 22  Targeting and engaging audiences; brand architecture

Read before class:

- “5 Ways To Use Your Audience Persona To Tell A Better Story” by Vanessa Chase  [http://www.thestorytellingnonprofit.com/blog/5-ways-to-use-your-audience-persona-to-tell-a-better-story/](http://www.thestorytellingnonprofit.com/blog/5-ways-to-use-your-audience-persona-to-tell-a-better-story/)
• “Create Personas to Bridge the Gap with Target Audiences” by Nancy Schwartz  
http://gettingattention.org/articles/202/audience-research/nonprofit-audience-research-persona.html
• “The #1 Nonprofit Branding Issue Impacting Organizations Today” by Meghan Dankovich (2015)  

Assignment: Submit worksheet “Audience Profile” for one audience using your case study organization

Session 5: November 5  
Making real-life brand and communications decisions

Read/purchase before class:
  http://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/55211605 (requires free registration, than payment of $4.25)
  • Review screenshots of DonorsChoose.org previous websites/brand images (posted on Classes)

Assignment: Come to class ready to discuss the DonorsChoose.org case study and ask questions.

Guest Speaker: Margie Cadet, Manager, Donor Relationships, DonorsChoose.org

Session 6: November 19  
Building partnerships and using campaigns to attract supporters

Read/watch before class:
  • “Campaigns as an Experience of Your Brand” [webinar/video] by Farra Trompeter (2013)  
  http://www.bigducknyc.com/webinar-october-30-campaigns-experience-of-your-brand
  • “Making #GivingTuesday a Movement” by Eileen Heisman (2013)  
  https://hbr.org/2013/11/making-givingtuesday-a-movement
  http://ssir.org/case_for_communications/entry/a_chorus_for_wildlife

Guest speakers: Jessica Schneider, Director of Strategy and Collaboration, 92Y and, Jennafer Bonello, Deputy Director, Media Relations, World Wildlife Fund

Assignment:
  • Review the website, sign the pledge, analyze the messaging and engagement, and come to class ready to discuss:  
  http://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/stop-wildlife-crime

Session 7: December 10  
Internal communications and best practices

Read before class:
  • “Internal communications: elements to include in your nonprofit’s plan” by Meg Shannon (2016)  
  http://nonprofitmarcommunity.com/internal-communications-plan-elements/
  • “16 Internal Communications Best Practices for 2016” by Colin Bovet (2016)  
  https://enplug.com/blog/16-internal-communications-best-practices-for-2016
  • “DARCI framework” by Robert Gass (2013)  
  • “How to Empower Staff to be the Voice for the Organization through Social Media” (webinar/video) by Farra Trompeter (2014)  
  https://vimeo.com/108941692 (empowerstaff)

Guest speakers: Lauren Gray, Senior Advisor for Communications, NYC Dept. of Homeless Services and possibly someone from Planned Parenthood Federation of America (to be confirmed)

Assignment: Submit 3-5 page memo proposing the strategic framework and communications recommendations for case study organization –  
Due 9am Saturday December 17