**Course Title:** Online Engagement: Making your Non-profit Matter in the Digital Space  
**Instructors:** Edith Asibey and Robyn Stein  
**Course Number:** PADM-GP 4133  
**Meeting Time:** Thursdays, June 7, 14, 21 from 4:30pm-8:30pm  
**Location:** TBD  
**Faculty Contact Information:** Emails will be returned within two business days.  
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**Social Media:** You are welcome to follow us on Twitter @easibey @robynstein. We would consider following you back only after the class has ended.  
**Office hours:** By appointment  

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**  
Nonprofit organizations use digital communications strategies to connect with and engage audiences, increase visibility, shift attitudes, raise money, and help create social change. This three-session intensive examines how organizations use digital and social media, including mobile-first technology to build relationships with audiences and communities.  

Through case studies and examples from local, national, and international organizations, students gain a broad understanding of digital communications, fundraising, and advocacy in the nonprofit sector. Students will apply standard SMART strategy models to analyze and develop digital programs and campaigns for nonprofit organizations to support their mission.  

**STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**  
The following are outlined for student understanding and clarity. They are designed to facilitate a successful class with robust discussion and learning.  
- **Technology** - You are welcome to use your cell phone, laptop, tablet, or other technology in the classroom when utilized as part of the class.  
- **Please read the syllabus on a regular basis. Plagiarism, Incompletes and Academic Integrity are covered in Wagner policies. It is your responsibility to become familiar with these policies.**  
- Please see Wagner’s Academic Policies re plagiarism, incompletes, etc.  
  [https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies](https://wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/policies)  
- **Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at each class. This is due to the short length of the semester. Please arrive on time so as not to miss what is being discussed and so as not to disturb those in attendance. Missed classes may negatively impact your grade. 1 missed class = 1 step reduction. Example is from A- to B+. Extenuating circumstances must be discussed with professors in advance.**  
- **Class participation is highly encouraged. Students are expected to ask pertinent questions, make comments and engage in the class conversation. Please be respectful of your classmates. Comments should be kept to no longer than 1 minute.**
Online engagement is expected. For the duration of the course, we’d like you to engage in conversation online by tweeting take-a-ways, ideas and/or questions between classes using the hashtag: #nyuwagner.

Classes may not be recorded.

ASSIGNMENTS | GRADING
Students will be graded on individual assignments and a final project:

- **Session One Assignments:**
  - Part One Survey
  - Part Two Assessment
- **Session Two Assignment:**
  - SMART CHART
  - Tweetdeck monitoring
- **Session Three Assignment:**
  - Part One Story
- **Final Project**
  - Part One
  - Part Two

Each assignment will be graded based on the above number of possible points and will be divided into specific sections as outlined. Student final grades will be on a curve based on the class as a whole. Our philosophy is that the average grade should be a B+.

**Nonprofit Organizations Selected for Assignments:**
For all assignments, please select one nonprofit organization to serve as your case study. It can be one you are already connected to, one you’ve always admired or one you would like to help. If you need assistance selecting organizations, please let us know during our first session or by email.

Please read assignment requirements carefully. Include your name, the date and the number of the assignment at the top of your submission. Also comply with required length and type size. Thank you.

**Grading Rubric:**
Your work will be evaluated based upon the quality of your insights and your ability to demonstrate that you have processed and integrated the readings and reflected upon our class discussions. We are looking for you to be succinct, explain your recommendations well and provide concrete insights for the readers.

Your assignments and final project are expected to be organized and thoughtful, logically stated, prepared for a decision maker to read, reflecting realities of nonprofit organizations’ resources, mission, and community. In other words, don’t anticipate a 4,000% increase in Facebook followers in three months unless you’re coming up with the next ALS bucket
challenge. Please apply insights to a practical, realistic discussion of strategic communications and digital engagement.

Your assignments should be well written (even if bulleted) and reflect professional quality in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and clarity. It should have a logical flow that presents and develops a clear, unified position/argument, where arguments are consistent (no contradictions or gaps) and based on critical thinking.

Consider assignments an opportunity to present work without typos; with length limits honored (if given); timeliness and other instructions followed.

Regarding references, footnoting is not required. You are encouraged to link to primary sources, especially if doing so further informs the assignment.

NOTE: Weekly assignments and the final project must be submitted by midnight on the date due unless approval is received in advance from the professors or if the due date is changed.

Non-approved extensions and extenuating circumstances not approved in advance may not be accepted or may receive a grade reduction of one step (A- to B+) or more. Students may receive 0 points for unexcused late submissions.

Learning Objectives: At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand how communicating and engaging through social media, websites, email, blogs, and mobile applications support the mission, outreach, visibility, advocacy, and fundraising efforts of nonprofit organizations.
- Identify and draft SMART strategy plans for digital engagement with clearly stated goals, objectives, audiences, decision-makers, tactics. (Plans may involve volunteer recruitment, issue advocacy, fundraising, issue awareness, brand recognition, etc.)
- Analyze the effectiveness of an organization’s digital engagement activities.
- Understand the use of effective listening tools to assess progress, course-correct, and more effectively engage with a variety of audiences.
- Identify and develop compelling content for effective storytelling that supports nonprofit mission and programs.
Session Descriptions and Assignments: (Subject to Change)

June 7, 2018: Session One: Introductions | Overview | SMART Components
The first session will offer an overview of strategic communication that must drive digital and social media strategy. Students will learn how to set up realistic objectives and milestones for a digital strategy, and do so in a way that is in synch with organizational objectives. Working together, students will practice making real-time course corrections to the strategy.

Key Learning Objectives:
- Demonstrate understanding of class responsibilities.
- Recognize best-in-class examples of nonprofit digital efforts, and describe how to assess their effectiveness.
- Demonstrate the basics of SMART plans, implementation, and milestones: goals, objectives and decision-makers.
- Identify realistic list of audiences and how to understand and listen to their needs, interests, desires and understand their relationship to and engagement with the organization.

Session One Assignments:
1. Part One: Complete and submit survey about your digital experiences and background. (You will receive a LINK to the Survey)
2. Part Two: Read the required resources (You will receive a LINK to Resources)
3. Part Three: Select one organization (as described above.) Examine their website, social media, mobile apps (if any), emails (if you receive their e-blasts), and whether these tools seem to be integrated. Draft a bulleted assessment (no longer than one page, 12-point type) of these digital strategies. Tell us what you personally like using the following list and if you feel there is an aspect you would like to see changed. Include assessment of:
   - Overall impression: Do you feel their digital communications are effective? Why or why not? Do you find yourself wanting to dig more into their digital channels?
   - Website: Include your thoughts about the homepage, the navigation bar, top landing pages, mobile responsiveness, integration with social media and/or other observations you would like to comment on.
   - Social media: Comment on their presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, other platforms as appropriate: is the content informative? Are people engaging with them? Does the frequency of the posts seem adequate?
   - Mobile apps: Do they have one? Do they use existing ones? If so, to what end?
   - E-blasts: If you receive these, what do you think? Do you open and read their communications? Do they seem effective? Why or why not?

June 14, 2018: Session Two: Content Strategies | Storytelling
The second session will focus on the fundamentals of storytelling and content strategies for the digital environment. Working in small groups, students will develop a content and editorial strategy that is fresh, responsive and that engages different audiences.
**Key Learning Objectives:**
- Identify qualities of good storytelling and the arc of a successful story
- Learn how to elicit stories from constituents and audiences
- Recognize the value of good stories for an organization
- Understand the value of developing a long-term relationship with story originators.

**Session Two Assignments:**
1. Part One: Read the required resources (You will receive a LINK to Resources)
2. Part Two: Based on what was discussed in Session One, complete the remaining categories of your SmartChart. Come to class prepared to discuss.
2. Using Tweetdeck or similar tool, monitor # [This will be decided by the first class]. Try to check it once a day. Come to class with two or three observations about the conversation: Is it positive, neutral or negative? Are there dominant voices? If so, who are they? Has the conversation changed throughout the week? If you were to engage in the conversation, how would you do so?

**June 21, 2018: Session Three: Metrics | Impact | Ethics**
The third and final session will introduce the latest approaches to digital listening, integrated metrics dashboards, and how to make strategy decisions based on listening to and engaging with audiences. Students will also discuss principles of ethical behavior in digital media, and how to uphold ethical standards in light of instances of misinformation and misrepresentation.

**Key Learning Objectives**
- Identify and understand real-life implications of metrics and developing a useful dashboard
- Examine various types ethical standards in digital engagement in order to weigh the organizational implications

**Session Three Assignments:**
1. Part One: Read the required resources (LINK to Resources sheet to be added)
2. Part Two: Draft a story (Approximately 400 words.) Use what you’ve learned about effective storytelling to draft a fictional piece about one of the organizations you care about.

**Final Project:** Due June 28, 2018

Develop a digital strategy (or plan) for an organization. The strategy should directly support the objective you chose in the Smart Chart you worked on during Sessions One and Two. There are two parts to this assignment.

**Part One of Two:** Submit a final paper of no more than 5 pages. Your paper should follow the following structure and include answers to the questions. Each section will be graded based on the points noted.
- **Organizational Info:** State the organization you chose and the concrete objective you’ve identified that a digital strategy will support. Include a bulleted explanation of how you expect the digital strategy to help achieve the objective.
- **Executive Summary**: Use up to a half page (single spaced) to broadly state the issue your digital strategy will address and that succinctly describes your recommendations in terms that the leadership of the organization you’ve selected could find insightful and useful in making decisions going forward.

- **Background**: What information did you gather to identify the digital needs of the organization and what were your main findings? Did these findings change in the time you’ve been following the organization? If so, how?

- **Digital outcomes/results**:
  - **Results**: What are up to three concrete digital results you propose to achieve? For instance, you might propose to triple engagement rates in a given channel. Please bullet these.
  - **Connecting the dots**: For each digital outcome/result, articulate how the digital results you propose will help achieve the chosen objective. For example, if your objective is to increase the number of monthly donors by 50%, explain how tripling online engagement rates would help achieve your objective.
  - **Tactics**: How do you propose to go about achieving such results? What needs to be done and what needs to change? What primary tactics and activities should the organization pursue? Include up to 5 tactics.

- **Content/editorial**: What needs to change in the type of content the organization currently uses to achieve the results you propose? What concrete measure would you put in place to put these changes in motion?

- **Timeline**: In what timeframe do you expect to achieve these outcomes

- **Budget and resources**: what estimated budget do you contemplate? What kind of human and other resources (i.e. partnerships, etc.) do you propose?

- **Monitor, digital listening and evaluation**: How will you keep track of progress? What actions would you recommend taking if things are not evolving as planned?

**Part Two of Two**: Include your completed Smart Chart as an annex to your paper. Sections to include will be announced.