COM400: Strategic Communication

Credit Hours: 3

Contact Hours: This is a 3-credit course, offered in accelerated format. This means that 16 weeks of material is covered in 8 weeks. The exact number of hours per week that you can expect to spend on each course will vary based upon the weekly coursework, as well as your study style and preferences. You should plan to spend 10-25 hours per week in each course reading material, interacting on the discussion boards, writing papers, completing projects, and doing research.

Faculty Information

Faculty contact information and office hours can be found on the faculty profile page.

Course Description and Outcomes

Course Description:
In this course, students explore the core of strategic communication: organizational reputation and relationship management. Students will apply and expand theory to practice by learning how to make, justify, and assess the impact of organizational decisions on internal and external relationships, corporate image, reputation, ethics, and trust.

Course Overview:
This course builds upon what students have learned in COM335 – the Foundations of Strategic Communication by taking their understanding of what strategic communication is, its history and development, along with the writing skills they have developed and ask them to apply them in a way that focuses on building an organization's reputation and relationship with key stakeholders (internal and external).

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe and assess the role(s) that strategic communication has on key internal and external stakeholder relationships influencing an organization's reputation.
2. Analyze strategic communication in the context of today's complex organizational and competitive message environments.
3. Evaluate strategy surrounding reputation and stakeholder relationship management.

Participation & Attendance

Prompt and consistent attendance in your online courses is essential for your success at CSU-Global Campus. Failure to verify your attendance within the first 7 days of this course may result in your withdrawal. If for some reason you would like to drop a course, please contact your advisor.

Online classes have deadlines, assignments, and participation requirements just like on-campus classes. Budget your time carefully and keep an open line of communication with your instructor. If you are having technical problems, problems with your assignments, or other problems that are impeding your progress, let your instructor know as soon as possible.

Course Materials

Required:

Roper, S., & Fill, C. (2012). *Corporate reputation: Branding and communication*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited. 978-0273727590

Wilcox, D. L., Cameron, G. T., Reber, B .H., & Shin, J. (2012). *THINK public relations (2ⁿᵈ ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. 978-0205857258

Suggested:

NOTE: *All non-textbook required readings and materials necessary to complete assignments, discussions, and/or supplemental or required exercises are provided within the course itself. Please read through each course module carefully.*

Course Schedule

Due Dates
The Academic Week at CSU-Global begins on Monday and ends the following Sunday.

- Discussion Boards: The original post must be completed by Thursday at 11:59 p.m. MT and Peer Responses posted by Sunday 11:59 p.m. MT. Late posts may not be awarded points.
- Opening Exercises: Take the opening exercise before reading each week's content to see which areas you will need to focus on. You may take these exercises as many times as you need. The opening exercises will not affect your final grade.
- Mastery Exercises: Students may access and retake mastery exercises through the last day of class until they achieve the scores they desire.
- Critical Thinking: Assignments are due Sunday at 11:59 p.m. MT.

Week #	Readings	Assignments
1	• Chapter 1 in *Corporate Reputation: Brand and Communication* • Chapters 1, 3, & 4 in *THINK Public Relations* (2ⁿᵈ ed.) Reputation champions come of age. (2013). *Management Today, 11*, 52-55.	• Discussion (25 points) • Opening Exercise (0 points) • Mastery Exercise (10 points)

	• Stocker, K. (2014). Paradox in public relations: Why managing relating makes more sense than managing relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 26*(4), 344-358. doi: 10.1080/1062726X.2014.908723	
2	• Chapter 3 & 10 in *Corporate Reputation: Brand and Communication* • Chapter 9 in *THINK Public Relations* (2nd ed.) • Berrone, P., Surroca, J., & Tribo, J. A. (2007). Corporate ethical identity as a determinant of firm performance: A test of the mediating role of stakeholder satisfaction. *Journal of Business Ethics, 76*(1) 35-53. doi: 10.1007/s10551-006-9276-1 • Lukas, B. A., Whitwell, G. J., & Heide, J. B. (2013). Why do customers get more than they need? How organizational culture shapes product capacity decisions. *Journal of Marketing, 77*(1), 1-12.	• Discussion (25 points) • Opening Exercise (0 points) • Mastery Exercise (10 points) • Critical Thinking (70 points) • Portfolio Project Milestone (25 points)
3	• Chapters 2 & 9 in *Corporate Reputation: Brand and Communication* • Chapters 10, 14, & 15 in *THINK Public Relations* (2nd ed.) • Diers, A. R. (2012). Reconstructing stakeholder relationships using 'corporate social responsibility' as a response strategy to cases of corporate irresponsibility: The case of the 2010 BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico. In R. Tensch, W. Sun, and B. Jones (Eds.), *Corporate Social Irresponsibility*, pp. 177-206. doi:10.1108/S2043-9059(2012)0000004017 • Becker-Olsen, K. L., Tayler, C. R., Hill, R. P., & Yalcinkaya, G. (2011). A cross-cultural examination of corporate social responsibility marketing communications in Mexico and the United States: Strategies for global brands. Journal of International Marketing, 19(2), 30-34. doi:10.1509/jimk.19.2.30	• Discussion (25 points) • Opening Exercise (0 points) • Mastery Exercise (10 points) • Critical Thinking (100 points)
4	• Chapter 11 in *Corporate Reputation: Brand and Communication* • Chapter 11 in *THINK Public Relations* (2nd ed.) • Einwiller, S. A., Carroll, Craig, E., Korn, K. (2010). Under what conditions do the news media influence corporate reputation? The roles of media dependency and need for orientation. *Corporate Reputation Review, 12*(4), 299-215. DOI: 10.1057/crr.2009.28 • Yannopoulou, N., Koronis, E., & Elliott, R. (2011). Media amplification of brand crisis and its effect on brand trust. *Journal of Marketing Management, 27*(5-6), 530-546.	• Discussion (25 points) • Opening Exercise (0 points) • Mastery Exercise (10 points) • Critical Thinking (100 points)
5	• Chapter 8 in *THINK Public Relations* (2nd ed.) • Roy, S. K., Eshghi, A., & Quazi, A. (2014). Consumer advocacy's impact on satisfaction and loyalty. *Journal of Services*	• Discussion (25 points) • Opening Exercise (0 points)

	Research, 14(1), 161-182. • Grebe, S. K. (2013). Things can get worse. *Corporate Communications, 18*(1), 70-86. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13563281311294137	• Mastery Exercise (10 points) • Critical Thinking (100 points)
6	• Chapters 4 & 7 in *Corporate Reputation: Brand and Communication* • Chapter 5 in *THINK Public Relations* (2nd ed.) • Template for strategic communications plan. (2006, January 1). Retrieved from http://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/01/template-for-strategic-communications-plan • International Association of Business Communication. (2012). The strategic communication plan: An overview. Retrieved from http://www.iabc.com/the-strategic-communication-plan/	• Discussion (25 points) • Opening Exercise (0 points) • Mastery Exercise (10 points) • Portfolio Project Milestone (25 points)
7	• Chapter 12 in *Corporate Reputation: Brand and Communication* • Chapters 6 & 7 in *THINK Public relations* (2nd ed.) • Bonson, E., & Ratkai, M. (2013). A set of metrics to assess stakeholder engagement and social legitimacy on a corporate Facebook page. *Online Information Review, 37*(5) 787-803. doi: 10.1108/OIR-03-2012-0054 • Ferguson, D. P., Wallace, J. D., & Chandler, R. C. (2012). Rehabilitating your organization's image: Public relations professionals' perceptions of the effectiveness and ethicality of image repair strategies in crisis situations. *Public Relations Journal, 6*(1). Retrieved from http://www.prsa.org/Intelligence/PRJournal/Documents/2012FergusonWallaceChandler.pdf	• Discussion (25 points) • Opening Exercise (0 points) • Mastery Exercise (10 points)
8	• Chapter 12 in *THINK public Relations* (2nd ed.) • Wang, F., Zheng, P., Yang, D., Freeman, B., Fu, H., & Chapman, S. (2014). Chinese tobacco industry promotional activity on the microblog Weibo. *Plos ONE, 9*(6), 1-6.	• Discussion (25 points) • Opening Exercise (0 points) • Mastery Exercise (10 points) • Portfolio (350 points)

Assignment Details

This course includes the following assignments/projects:

Module 2

CRITICAL THINKING ASSIGNMENT (70 points)

Choose one of the following two assignments to complete this week. Do not do both assignments. Identify your assignment choice in the title of your submission.

Option #1: Forms of Organizational Culture

For the organization that you have identified this week for your Portfolio Project, analyze the organization's culture using Trice and Beyers' Forms of Organizational Culture (symbols, language, narratives, and practices). See the videos on this in the Week 2 lecture pages.

Create a table with a column for each of the forms. Present the table as part of the evidence supporting your position. Include at least three examples from the organization's website, social media platforms, or any available information for each form.

Write a paper that addresses whether the organization's actions/documents are aligned with its mission and vision.

Your paper should meet the following requirements:

- Be between 2-3 pages in length, with a separate title page, and reference page.
- Formatted according to *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements.*
- Include a minimum of 2 current and credible sources. Sources should be adequately chosen to provide substance and perspectives on the issue.
- Present an effective table as part of the evidence for the argument.
- Make a strong evaluation that grounds the observations in the course material.

Option #2: Corporate Reputation and Ethical Concerns

Refer to the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards Code of Ethics and build an ethical assessment of the case below.

Create a table with a column for each of the PRSA's statements of professional values, and then include elements of the case in each column.

Write a paper answering the question: Is there significant ethical and/or reputation concern for the organization?

- If your response is yes, focus on evaluating the key ethical problems.
- If your response is no, focus on explaining why the case is not an ethical issue.

Case**:**
You are the director of public relations for Megabucks Energy Company, a Houston-based Fortune 500 oil and gas exploration and production company. Megabucks has been experiencing declining profits due to drops in oil and gas prices. Recent drilling on one of the company's properties in the Java Sea has produced promising results of a significant new oil and gas reservoir. Although geological testing is incomplete, rumors are flying in the marketplace about the potential of this new well to significantly increase Megabucks's profits. Senior management asks you to prepare a news release that responds to these rumors and downplays the significance of the find. As part of your research, you discover internal reports that show that this new well is, indeed, a major discovery and that further testing is planned simply to determine the size of the reservoir.

Your paper should meet the following requirements:

- Be between 2-3 pages in length, with a separate title page and reference page.
- Formatted according to *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements.*
- Include a minimum of 2 current and credible sources. Sources should be adequately chosen to provide substance and perspectives on the issue.
- Present an effective table as part of the evidence for the argument.
- Make a strong evaluation that grounds the observations in the course material.

PORTFOLIO PROJECT MILESTONE (25 points)

Option 1: Identify an Organization and Project Focus

For this project, you will be creating a proposal for a strategic communication campaign. This can be for any organization – one that you already work for, one that you're familiar with, or one that you're interested in. Your campaign should either be solving a reputational problem for the organization or creating an opportunity to enhance its reputation.

By the end of week 2, you should identify the organization and the broad focus for the campaign (i.e., solving a problem or creating a chance to build reputation). Write a paragraph explaining why you have selected this organization and project focus.

Become familiar with the strategic communications plan template available from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation because it will serve as a guide for formatting the final communications plan. You can download the template from the assignment in the Week 2 folder.

NOTE: Although you will not earn points in Week 2 for this deliverable, it is a required component of the Portfolio Project, and you will lose points on your final project grade if you fail to submit this assignment as required by the end of Week 2. See the Portfolio Project grading rubric for details.

Option 2: Identify an Organization and Project Focus

For this project, you will be conducting an in-depth issues management assessment for an organization. This can be for any organization – one that you already work for, one that you're familiar with, or one that you're interested in. Your issues assessment should focus on issues that could affect an organization's internal and/or external reputation.

By the end of week 2, you should identify the organization and the type(s) of issues you are going to explore for the project. Write a paragraph explaining why you have selected this organization and the type(s) of issues. Become familiar with the issues management process as recommended by the Institute of Public Relations because it will serve as a guide for formatting the final issues management assessment. You can find the link to the Institute of Public Relations' website in this assignment in the Week 2 folder.

NOTE: Although you will not earn points in Week 2 for this deliverable, it is a required component of the Portfolio Project, and you will lose points on your final project grade if you fail to submit this assignment as required by the end of Week 2. See the Portfolio Project grading rubric for details.

Module 3

CRITICAL THINKING ASSIGNMENT (100 points)

Choose one of the following two assignments to complete this week. Do not do both assignments. Identify your assignment choice in the title of your submission.

Option 1: Critical Relationship Analysis

Using the Stakeholder Relationship Model (see Diers, 2012 and/or your module material for this week), conduct a critical relationship analysis of the organization you're using for your portfolio project.

In your analysis, you should identify at least one important issue and two important stakeholder groups. Then use the "factors" predicting relationships between the organization and stakeholders, organization and issue, and issue and stakeholders to assess potential problems or opportunities for the organization.

Your analysis should meet the following requirements:

- Be between 3-4 pages in length, with a separate title page, and reference page.

- Formatted according to *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements.*
- Have a clear central thesis summarizing the results of the analysis.
- Demonstrate a clear application of the conceptual material to the case.
- Provide a succinct explanation of and support for assessments made.

Option 2: Corporate Communication Analysis (100 points)

Identify three organizations from the same industry (e.g., automotive, airlines, financial services, etc.) and compare and contrast the way each uses corporate communication (media, social media, website, interviews, YouTube, etc.).

In your analysis you should briefly summarize how each use corporate communication; however, your essay should focus on a comparative evaluation of the *effectiveness* of the three organizations based on the principles discussed in your readings for the week.

Your analysis should meet the following requirements:

- Be between 3-4 pages in length, with a separate title page, and reference page.
- Formatted according to *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements.*
- Have a clear central thesis summarizing the results of the analysis.
- Demonstrate a clear application of the conceptual material to the case.
- Provide a succinct explanation of and support for the assessments made.

Module 4

CRITICAL THINKING ASSIGNMENT (100 points)

Choose one of the following two assignments to complete this week. Do not do both assignments. Identify your assignment choice in the title of your submission.

Option 1: Media Assessment

For the organization that you're using for your portfolio project, conduct a media assessment of the organization's coverage in the news. (This assignment will be best if your organization is regularly in the news. If your organization is not regularly in the news, then explore its broader industry as this is also a way for organizations to think about media coverage).

In your analysis, specify a time-frame (e.g., 1 week, 1 month, 1 year depending on how much media coverage your organization gets) and assess the coverage based on the following questions:

- How is the organization portrayed (positive, neutral, or negative) across the coverage?
- What topics is your organization connected to in the coverage?
- How consistently is your organization quoted in the coverage?
- How many different sources covered your organization?
- What kind of different sources covered your organization?

You may want to create a table to summarize your findings. In addition, write a paper answering the question: What kind of agenda setting is evident with regard to your organization? Be sure to clearly evaluate the reputational risks or opportunities associated with the coverage based on your analysis.

Your analysis should meet the following requirements:

- Be between 3-4 pages in length, with a separate title page, and reference page.

- Formatted according to *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements.*
- Directly answers the question.
- Present a clear and succinct summary of the analysis conducted.
- Provide clear implications of the analysis.

Option 2: Journalists' Interview

Contact journalists from two different news sources and interview them about their experiences or evaluations of corporate news releases that are likely to get used as the basis of a news story.

Develop interview questions centered on the following topics:

- Factors that guide their selection of suitable or unsuitable news releases for their newsmaking process
- Do's and don'ts in public relations
- Relationships they must build with public relations or corporate communications professionals
- Advantages and disadvantages of using news releases as a basis for stories they write/have written.

Once you have completed the interviews, it may be helpful to build a table to summarize your findings. In addition, write a paper answering the question: How much influence do corporate communication practitioners and journalists have on each other? Be sure to clearly evaluate the reputational risks or opportunities associated with your answer.

Your analysis should:

- Be between 3-4 pages in length, with a separate title page, and reference page.
- Be formatted according to *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements.*
- Directly answer the questions.
- Present a clear and succinct summary of the analysis conducted.
- Provide clear implications of the analysis.

Module 5

CRITICAL THINKING ASSIGNMENT (100 points)

Choose one of the following two assignments to complete this week. Do not do both assignments. Identify your assignment choice in the title of your submission.

Option 1: Apply Your Knowledge

Given the situation described below, if you were a strategic communication professional, what would you do?

Situation:
   Monsanto risks appearing inflexible or unresponsive to the concerns of employees and the community by positioning itself toward the advocacy end of the contingency continuum. Small and medium-sized family farmers may gain considerable traction in the court of public opinion by positioning themselves as victims of a corporate Goliath. In this case, Monsanto is probably best served by a move toward accommodating smaller farmers at some level, perhaps through special donations or reduced costs on its seed in certain communities. The company should also highlight any charitable works and community programs in which it is involved. At the same time, Monsanto's public relations department must focus on clearly explaining the high costs of product development and the value of patented seed to the public, following the phases of strategic conflict management.

Your response should meet the following requirements:
- Be between 3-4 pages in length, with a separate title page, and reference page.

- Formatted according to *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements.*
- Clearly apply the conceptual materials to assess and build your response
- Demonstrate a strong response/example of communication strategy for this situation

Option 2: Apply Your Knowledge

Identify an ongoing case related to conflict management (e.g., issues management, risk management, or crisis management). Develop a news release and fact sheet for an organization or group connected to the case. You can choose the organization being scrutinized or critics of the organization. Provide a link to at least one news article about the case in an Appendix.

Your response should meet the following requirements:

- Be between 3-4 pages in length, with a separate title page, and reference page.
- Formatted according to *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements.*
- Clearly apply the conceptual materials to assess and build your response
- Demonstrate a strong response/example of communication strategy for this situation

Module 6

PORTFOLIO PROJECT MILESTONE (25 points)

Option 1: Communications Plan Worksheet

As a way of beginning to organize your thoughts for the portfolio project, fill out the strategic communications plan template from W.K. Kellogg's website and submit it for review. (A link to the template can be found in the assignment in the Week 6 folder.)

NOTE: Although you will not earn points in Week 6 for this deliverable, it is a required component of the Portfolio Project, and you will lose points on your final project grade if you fail to submit this assignment as required by the end of Week 6. See the Portfolio Project grading rubric for details.

Option 2: Components of Issue Management

As a way of beginning to organize your thoughts for your portfolio project, outline the information that you have available for each component of an effective issue management plan from the Institute for Public Relations' website and submit it for review. (A link to the website can be found in this assignment in the Week 6 folder.)

NOTE: Although you will not earn points in Week 6 for this deliverable, it is a required component of the Portfolio Project, and you will lose points on your final project grade if you fail to submit this assignment as required by the end of Week 6.

Module 8

PORTFOLIO PROJECT (350 points)

Option 1: Strategic Communication Campaign

For this project, you will be creating a proposal for a strategic communication campaign for the organization and campaign focus that you identified in Module 2.

You should follow the strategic communications plan template from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation as a guide for formatting the final communications plan. (A link to the template can be found in this assignment in the Week 8 folder.)

Your final project should meet these requirements:

- Include a cover letter to pitch the proposal effectively.
- Produce a professional-quality piece of work (i.e., APA formatting is not required other than for the references page; this should be a professional report).
- Ground your proposal with the appropriate strategic communication, reputation, and public relations materials and concepts discussed in this class.
- Incorporate both conceptual and applied research to support your assertions (a minimum of 5 peer-reviewed sources and an additional 3-5 quality professional, current events/news, or assessment resources should be included)
- Ground the message with a clear theoretical approach to message design.
- The entire report should be 8-10 pages (excluding the cover letter, executive summary, campaign samples, and references)
- Incorporate effective tables or figures to present key information.
- Include at least 2 samples of materials that would be disseminated as a result of your project.

Option 2: Issues Management Assessment

For this project, you will be conducting an in-depth issues management assessment for the organization and the issues that could affect the organization's internal and/or external reputation that you identified in Module 2. You should follow the recommendations for building an integrated issues management process from the Institute for Public Relations Foundation (you can find a link to the website in the assignment in the Week 8 folder) as a guide for formatting the final issues management assessment.
Your final project should meet these requirements:

- Include a cover letter to pitch the proposal effectively.
- Produce a professional-quality piece of work (i.e., APA formatting is not required, aside from the reference page; this should be a professional report).
- Ground your proposal with the appropriate strategic communication, reputation, and public relations materials and concepts discussed in this class.
- Incorporate both conceptual and applied research to support your assertions (a minimum of 5 peer-reviewed sources and an additional 3-5 quality professional, current events/news, or assessment resources should be included)
- Ground the message with a clear theoretical approach to message design.
- The entire report should be 8-10 pages (excluding the cover letter, executive summary, campaign samples, and references)
- Incorporate effective tables or figures to present key information.
- Include at least 2 samples of materials that would be disseminated as a result of your project.

Course Policies

Course Grading

20% Discussion Participation
0%   Opening Exercises
8%   Mastery Exercises
37% Critical Thinking Assignments
35% Final Portfolio Paper

Grading Scale and Policies

A	95.0 – 100
A-	90.0 – 94.9
B+	86.7 – 89.9
B	83.3 – 86.6
B-	80.0 – 83.2

C+	75.0 – 79.9
C	70.0 – 74.9
D	60.0 – 69.9
F	59.9 or below

In-Classroom Policies
For information on late work and incomplete grade policies, please refer to our **In-Classroom Student Policies and Guidelines** or the Academic Catalog for comprehensive documentation of CSU-Global institutional policies.

Academic Integrity
Students must assume responsibility for maintaining honesty in all work submitted for credit and in any other work designated by the instructor of the course. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, plagiarism, reusing /re-purposing your own work (see *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements* for percentage of repurposed work that can be used in an assignment), unauthorized possession of academic materials, and unauthorized collaboration. The CSU-Global Library provides information on how students can avoid plagiarism by understanding what it is and how to use the Library and Internet resources.

Citing Sources with APA Style
All students are expected to follow the *CSU-Global Guide to Writing and APA Requirements* when citing in APA (based on the APA Style Manual, 6th edition) for all assignments. For details on CSU-Global APA style, please review the APA resources within the CSU-Global Library under the "APA Guide & Resources" link. A link to this document should also be provided within most assignment descriptions in your course.

Disability Services Statement
CSU–Global is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability requesting academic accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Coordinator at 720-279-0650 and/or email ada@CSUGlobal.edu for additional information to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Netiquette
Respect the diversity of opinions among the instructor and classmates and engage with them in a courteous, respectful, and professional manner. All posts and classroom communication must be conducted in accordance with the student code of conduct. Think before you push the Send button. Did you say just what you meant? How will the person on the other end read the words?

Maintain an environment free of harassment, stalking, threats, abuse, insults or humiliation toward the instructor and classmates. This includes, but is not limited to, demeaning written or oral comments of an ethnic, religious, age, disability, sexist (or sexual orientation), or racist nature; and the unwanted sexual advances or intimidations by email, or on discussion boards and other postings within or connected to the online classroom.

If you have concerns about something that has been said, please let your instructor know.