

Fall 2017: CMAT 445-001 – Digital Public Relations
Tues/Thurs, 09:30AM—10:45AM | DH 126
Salisbury University
Course Syllabus

Course Websites:

<http://drvinitaagarwal.com/> [QR Code below] | @vinitaagarwal | My Classes Canvas
Course Twitter Hashtag: #DP445

Instructor Contact Information:

Dr. Vinita Agarwal
Associate Professor, Dept. of Communication Arts
Office: Fulton Hall 272 | Email: vxagarwal@salisbury.edu
Office Hours: T 1:30PM –2:30PM, W 1:00PM–3:00PM, & TR 1:30PM—3:30PM



Prerequisite

Junior standing and CMAT 101 and 102 with a grade of C or better.

Course Description

CMAT 445—Digital Public Relations. Designed for the advanced student, the course will teach principles of digital communications management and their application to develop strategy, conduct analytic audience research, design messages and drive behavior, and select from a multitude of digital platforms in achieving their goals and objectives as a digital communications consultant. Students who successfully complete the course will demonstrate a fundamental understanding of leveraging digital communication principles and data-driven audience insight to achieve selected digital engagement goals. CMAT 445 is an enhanced elective course in the Fulton curriculum, requiring intensive study in any one area of speech or communication studies, ideally in the student’s track. All enhanced courses are offered as a 4-credit class to engage students more fully in the courses they take and provide students with a deeper and more active encounter with the subject at hand. CMAT 445 is a web-enhanced course. Scheduled in-class meetings are supplemented as required with online and digitally mediated delivery of course content and assignments, as well as required and/or optional digitally engaged activities following a flipped classroom format. These require basic proficiency with word processing software, digital content management platforms (Wordpress), and an ability and willingness to navigate online modalities (e.g., Twitter, social networks) via desktop and mobile media (e.g., YouTube, Wordpress).

Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum

This course supports the University’s mission statement, which states in part, “Our highest purpose is to empower our students with the knowledge, skills, and core values that contribute to active citizenship, gainful employment, and life-long learning in a democratic society and interdependent world.” In

accordance with these goals, students in this course will participate in a civic engagement activity related to a pressing social issue. Students will interact with community members outside of the classroom and potentially share the outcomes of their efforts beyond the classroom setting.

Learning Objectives

The course provides students with advanced knowledge of digital communication principles, persuasion theory and constructs, and advanced analytic inquiry to guide specific strategic planning and digital engagement initiatives connecting theory to practice. Students gain in-depth experience in designing, planning, and implementing an integrated digital strategy utilizing a content management platform with multi-channel messaging tailored toward achieving specific course goals and objectives. The course presumes familiarity with basic digital engagement protocol on major platforms including Wordpress, Twitter, and YouTube. Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- i. Critically evaluate digital communication principles of organizations to identify best practices
- ii. Articulate meaningful research questions to guide digital engagement goals
- iii. Proficiently utilize digital platforms to drive integrated strategy
- iv. Manage and coordinate projects in a fast paced digital environment
- v. Develop and implement online strategic communications plans
- vi. Utilize data analytics, stakeholder management, messaging, and multichannel tactics
- vii. Design and implement digital micro-campaigns
- viii. Monitor tracking after campaign launch to ensure campaign implementation
- ix. Build strong professional relationships based on ethical principles with key audiences
- x. Cultivate critical thinking, presentation, and organizational skills

Required Textbooks

There is no required textbook. Selected readings, case studies resources, and online lectures as necessary will be made available by the instructor and include:

Selected Readings (on My Classes):

- ◆ Atkin, C.K., & Rice, R.R. (2013). Advances in public communication campaigns. In E. Scharrer (Ed.). *The international encyclopedia of media studies: Vol. 5: Media effects/Media psychology* (pp.526–551). London, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- ◆ Hallahan, K., Holtzhausen, D., van Ruler, B., Vercic, D., & Sriramesh, K. (2007). Defining Strategic Communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1, 3–35.
- ◆ Patterson, S.J., & Radtke, J.M. (2009). *Strategic Communications for Nonprofit Organizations: Seven steps to creating a successful plan*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Exam Resources (Online):

Google AdWords Certification (<https://support.google.com/partners/answer/3154326?hl=en>)

Google Analytics (<https://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/>)

Case Study Resources (Online):

Harvard Business Review (<https://hbr.org/>)

Content Marketing Institute (<http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/>)

Clickz (<https://www.clickz.com/>)

AdWeek (<http://www.adweek.com/digital/>)

Moz (<https://moz.com/>)

Fast Company (<https://www.fastcompany.com/>)

Digitalist Magazine (<http://www.digitalistmag.com/>)

Digital CRM (<http://www.destinationcrm.com/>)

Information Age (<http://www.information-age.com/>)
Institute for PR (<http://www.instituteforpr.org/>)
PR News Online (<http://www.prnewsonline.com/>)
PR Newswire (<http://www.prnewswire.com/>)

Recommended

- ◆ DiStasio, M. W., & Bortree, D. S. (Eds.) (2014). *Ethical practice of social media in public relations*. New York: Routledge.

Equipment Policy

As this is a digital communications course, extensive use of technology is expected. Having a smartphone (iOS or Android) is strongly recommended. Your ability to participate in a range of digital platforms and make use of different tools is expected (e.g., Wordpress, YouTube, Twitter).

Copyright Statement

All content (lectures, assignments, handouts) are the property of the instructor and protected under copyright law. You may not publicly distribute or display or share my course materials, online content, or lecture notes without my written permission.

Attendance

The course requires completing online readings, lectures, or peer-critiques in advance of the class. In-class and Twitter Hashtag meetings are intense and content-driven engagement designed to facilitate learning of course content through discussion and critique of current case studies, demonstration of a range of digital applications, and engagement with digital PR principles. Attendance in class sessions through the semester is expected and assessed through various forms of learning outcomes. Absences will negatively impact your grade. In-class participation cannot be made up. Please discuss with me in advance any unique/special consideration that may impact your participation (e.g., university or sports related responsibilities). If an unforeseen issue necessitates prolonged absence (i.e., greater than one missed week of class during the semester), this course may not be for you. Please evaluate your course standing and/or consider alternatives in a timely manner, especially if you are a graduating senior.

Participation

The course learning is premised on engagement with digital PR principles on digital platforms and in class meetings. Through focused participation structured specifically for each class, the student learning experience through the semester is designed to build up expertise and high-level competence with content creation, strategy, message design, channel selection, audience engagement, and integration of evaluation metrics. Successful students will approach each class meeting with a goal to participate in digital/in-person engagement with a community of peers sharing a common learning goal. Course learning outcomes are achieved through daily progress in the course via collective feedback and critique.

Course Ethos

As advanced PR students, students will demonstrate professional behavior standards corresponding to those expected of new digital communications specialist hires in the industry. These apply to every activity we engage in as a learning community during the semester—from Twitter Hashtag MeetUp's to in-class peer critique and discussion, to your digital engagement with members of the campus community. From my end, I will strive to provide each of you with the resources and guidance necessary to achieve the course objectives and toward your development as members of a globalized, cosmopolitan community of digital PR communications professionals. Do make use of my office hours to assist you with your learning objectives. I expect you to take the initiative to seek my help in a timely and

professional manner. Any personal accommodations made during the semester will be at my discretion weighing individual circumstances against the principle of fairness and justice to other class members.

Deadlines, Late Policy, and Make-Ups

Deadlines are critical for professional success in today's work environments, and paramount for PR professionals. Here are a few general guidelines:

1. Monitor grades regularly. The course assesses almost every form of your engagement and output.
2. All deadlines are final.
3. Some forms of participation cannot be made up (e.g., in-class peer-presentation discussion).
4. All grade assignments will be taken as final one class period after the graded assignment has been entered on Grade book in My Classes.
5. Do not discuss grade-related matters at end of class or via email. Please stop by my office to do so.
6. Late assignments, when allowed, get a late penalty of a letter grade for each class period it is late and will not be accepted after two class periods from the due date.
7. You are responsible for obtaining permissions (when allowed) or making up any missed work through obtaining a meeting with the instructor in a timely manner (see point 6 above).

Grading Policy

I strive to enter your grades within a week of their submission. You are responsible for monitoring your grade on My Classes. All grades are considered final after one week of being returned to class. You have up to one week from the day grades are returned to you to bring any concerns to my notice. Requests that bring up grade-related concerns more than a week old will not be reviewed. The process assumes you accept the possibility the grades can be revised upward/downward upon review. I do not keep records of in-class assignments more than a week after grades are made available. My grading is based on the following rule-of-thumb: "C" work meets the basic outlined criteria, "B" work does a great job of meeting the outlined criteria, and "A" work does an excellent job of meeting the outlined criteria, but also surpasses expectations to demonstrate innovative/thoughtful applications of the content that go beyond. "D" work does not meet one of the basic criteria outlined for the assignment at an acceptable level, and "F" work is substandard and does not meet basic expectations on two or more of the outlined criteria.

Digital Engagement Ethos

Digital engagement will be a fundamental means of accomplishing learning through the semester. During the semester, students will engage intensively in digital communication with each other as course members and with members of the campus community. Cultivating an authentic, strategic, and thoughtful engagement strategy is expected from students as a form of demonstrating your course learning-through-engagement ethos. Each statement and form of your engagement—through class Twitter Hashtag MeetUp's, in-class and online peer-discussion and critique, Wordpress website, and YouTube—should demonstrate your grasp of digital PR communications principles and will be assessed for its value and thoughtfulness in engaging strategically as a professional digital PR participant in the course.

Support Services

For trouble with your connection, access to the course website or the materials therein please contact IT at 410-677-5454, at TETC Room 113 or via email at helpdesk@salisbury.edu.

Emergency Policy

In the event of an emergency, course-related information/announcements and information will be communicated via instructor email, My Classes course website, and SU's home page.

Office of Student Disability Support Services (OSDSS)

The OSDSS provides guidance, access to resources, and accommodations for students with documented disabilities including: medical, psychiatric, and/or learning disabilities, and/or mobility, visual, and/or hearing impairments. They can be reached at 410-677-6536.

Academic Integrity

The CMAT department expects you have read and understand the University's policy as described in the *Student Policy on Academic Integrity* in your *SU Student Handbook* (www.salisbury.edu/Students/handbook/welcome.html) and agree to honor these standards. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense subject to disciplinary action including separation from the university.

Email Policy and Communication

Students are encouraged to reach me during out of class or office hours for feedback and/or technical assistance via email on My Classes. In general, I will strive to respond to your email within 48 hours of receipt (and by Monday, 5:00PM if sent over weekend). Please monitor your email and My Classes regularly for updates and salient information regarding course-related work.

Office Hours

I will hold office hours on Tuesday between 12:15PM –4:15PM and TR between 4:15PM—5:15PM in FH 272. Other hours may be arranged by appointment.

Assignment Description

Through each of the following specially designed applications, you will apply the digital communication strategies and principles you will learn through the semester in a range of projects building upon and cultivating a range of digital communication competencies. These are specially designed to provide the student an in-depth and expert-level familiarity with digital public relations through engagement demonstrating successful grasp of digital PR principles. Detailed instructions and handouts will be provided at appropriate times in the semester.

- ⇒ **Micro-Campaign (150 points):** Higher education research identifies several issues that need to be addressed on U.S. college campuses. These include stress and depression, alcohol abuse, drunk driving, bullying, sexual assault, access to academic advisors, hazing in student clubs or organizations, diversity, job placement, among others. Starting week 8, this month-long micro-campaign utilizes (at least) any 2 digital networks appropriate to your target audience and addresses an issue of your choice, tailored toward a very focused target audience segment to increase awareness, utilization of a campus resource, behavior change, or a positive outcome related to the issue. The micro-campaign assessment will emphasize the criteria of audience engagement, formative, process, and outcome evaluation, strategy, message content, and channels utilized. Assignment grade assessment will weigh metrics to demonstrate effectiveness/success in engaging audience and achieving campaign goals and objectives.
- ⇒ **Issue Analysis (50 points):** The issue analysis will survey the history, scope, current and past programs, target audiences served, and stakeholders, policymakers, and influencers around a social issue of your choice. Submit it as an in-depth website article (about a 500 words in length) under a tab created for that issue. Format it as an e-Newsletter pdf and Tweet it to the course Twitter hashtag. Students are encouraged to build their final project micro-campaign around the issue they have researched for this assignment.
- ⇒ **Digital Class Participation:** About four times this semester, we will engage on our Twitter Hashtag meet. Twitter Hashtag MeetUp's will be organized around the topic for the class per the syllabus. In general, students will be provided online lecture/resources/class readings to review before class starts. The Twitter Hashtag class will be organized around a series of thought prompts based on the class online lecture and readings. Students will be guided to post their responses, share their thoughts, build on ideas in the lecture and readings, and provide resources of their own on our Twitter Hashtag.

Students will also engage with the ideas of at least 3 other students' Twitter posts for the meet and engage thoughtfully with others' posts on their Tweets.

- ⇒ **Digital Case Study (25 points):** Each student will complete 4 case studies through the semester. The case study will examine one current organization's digitally focused strategy for its successes and failures. Utilizing a depth and breadth of online resources like trade magazines (see online resources below), the case study presents the culture, values, goals, strategy, tactics of an organization with key insights into its target audience, messaging, channels, and product launches/issue foci. The case study is presented as around a 150-word blog on your Wordpress site home page under a separate tab (e.g., "Case Studies,") and as a around 2–3 minute (ideally!) YouTube video on your YouTube channel set up for the course and integrated with your WordPress website. Your critique should demonstrate cognizance of concepts from the public relations/persuasion theories in offering recommendations or analyzing failures. These will be analyzed in class as marked in the syllabus through discussion/critique. Toward the end of the semester, your overall YouTube channel presentation style/voice, messaging and content strategy, and engagement will be assessed through instructor-/peer-review.
- ⇒ **Exams (50 points):** There are 3 exams during the semester utilizing the online resources of Google Analytics and AdWords Fundamentals. Student completion of the exams will prepare them to complete the Google Analytics and AdWords certifications on their own. Completion of Google Analytics and AdWords certification is encouraged and accepted in lieu of the exams. Students have an option of *completing any two of the three exams/drop their lowest grade* from the three exams.

<u>Grading</u>	
Assignment	Total Points
➤ Micro-Campaign	25%
➤ Issue Analysis	15%
➤ Digital Class Participation	20%
➤ Digital Case Study	20%
➤ Exams	20%

Grade Breakdown

A= 90.0% & above; B= 80.0%-89.0%; C= 70.0%-79.0%; D= 60.0%-69.0%; F= 59.0% & below

- ❖ **Important Semester Dates:** Aug. 28—Dec. 11: Fall 2017 Session dates | Aug. 28: First day of classes | Aug. 28—Sept. 1: Add/drop | Sept. 4: Labor Day | Nov. 3: Last day to Withdraw with a grade of (W) | Nov. 22—Nov. 24: Thanksgiving Break | Dec. 12: Reading day | Dec. 13—Dec. 19: Finals week | Dec. 20: Commencement

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE: Digital Public Relations		
* Schedule May be Adjusted Based on Semester Progress (Check In-Class or My Classes Announcements)		
Meeting	Readings	Assignments
	<u>WEEK # 1</u>	
(T) Aug 29	Introductions, Syllabus What is digital strategy	<i>Setting up course Twitter chat & hashtag</i>
(TR) Aug 31	<u>DIGITAL PR</u> What are micro-campaigns Digital campaign principles	Website design: Wordpress

	<u>WEEK # 2</u>	
(T) Sept. 5	<u>DIGITAL PERSUASION</u> Relationship-building approach to communication Overview of key persuasion theories	<i>Google Analytics for Beginners (start), Set up Wordpress Website</i>
(TR) Sept. 7	Strategic Communications Planning	
	<u>WEEK # 3</u>	
(T) Sept. 12	<u>PLANNING IS KING</u> Situation Analysis	Blogging, YouTube channel set up
(TR) Sept. 14	Goals and primary focus Objectives and strategy	
	<u>WEEK # 4</u>	
(T) Sept. 19	<u>KNOW THY AUDIENCE</u> Audience Segmentation: Identifying focal audience segments Stakeholder Analysis: Identifying Influencers and Policy Makers	
(TR) Sept. 21	Strategic Planning Draft meetings with instructor	Issue Analysis Due
	<u>WEEK # 5</u>	
(T) Sept. 26	<u>EVALUATE</u> Exam 1: Google Analytics for Beginners	
(TR) Sept 28	Formative Evaluation Content Marketing	<i>Advanced Google Academy (start) Case Study 1</i>
	<u>WEEK # 6</u>	
(T) Oct. 3	<u>A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME</u> Message Design: Awareness, Instruction, Persuasive Message Dissemination: Volume, Repetition, Scheduling, Pulsing	Case Study 2
(TR) Oct. 5	Message Elements, Sources, Channels	Twitter Hashtag Meet
	<u>WEEK # 7</u>	
(T) Oct. 10	<u>TO GIVE A LITTLE</u> Process Evaluation, Outcome Evaluation	Case Study 3
(TR) Oct. 12	Corporate Social Responsibility	Twitter Hashtag meet
	<u>WEEK # 8</u>	
(T) Oct. 17	<u>REPUTATIONS MATTER</u> Micro Campaigns strategic plan due	Start Campaign Implementation
(TR) Oct. 19	Reputation Management Authenticity	Twitter Hashtag meet
	<u>WEEK # 9</u>	
(T) Oct. 24	<u>FROM THE WATCHTOWER</u> Formative evaluation	Case Study 4
(TR) Oct 26	Exam 2: Advanced Google Academy	
	<u>WEEK # 10</u>	
	<u>MESSAGE CONTENT, SOURCE CREDIBILITY</u>	<i>Start AdWords</i>

(T) Oct 31	<i>Infographs</i>	
(TR) Nov. 2	Digital Crisis Management (Tentative topic)	<i>Guest speaker (Industry-tentative)</i>
	<u>WEEK # 11</u>	
(T) Nov. 7	<u>LET'S TALK</u> Individual Review	
(TR) Nov. 9	YouTube channel: Content, Messaging, and Strategic Communication	In-class peer-critique presentation
	<u>WEEK # 12</u>	
(T) Nov. 14	<u>RELATIONSHIPS</u> Campaign Report Write-Up meetings with instructor	Conclude Campaign Implementation
(TR) Nov. 16	Relationship management (At NCA, Dallas, we will not meet as a class)	Twitter Hashtag participation
	<u>WEEK # 13</u>	
(T) Nov. 21	<u>CAN WE COUNT THE LOVE</u> Exam 3: AdWords Fundamentals (Modules 1–3)	
(TR) Nov. 23	No class—Thanksgiving (Nov. 22—Nov. 24)	Happy Thanksgiving!
	<u>WEEK # 14</u>	
(T) Nov. 28	<u>COMMUNITY OF PEERS</u> Individual meetings with instructor: Finalize Micro-Campaign reports	
(TR) Nov. 30	Micro-Campaigns	Presentation, discussion, peer-and instructor critique
	<u>WEEK # 15</u>	
(T) Dec. 5	<u>COMMUNITY OF PEERS</u> Micro-Campaigns	
(TR) Dec. 7	Micro-Campaigns	Presentation, discussion, peer-and instructor critique
Finals Week Dec 13–19	Final Reports Tuesday, December 19, 8:00AM–10:30AM	