

**VCU School of Mass Communications
MASC 336-901 – Social Media in PR
Spring 2015 Syllabus**

Instructor Details

Instructor: Rowena L. Briones, Ph.D.
Office: 2203F Temple Building, 901 W. Main St
Telephones: 804-827-2048
E-mail: rlbriones@vcu.edu
Twitter: @RLBriones (Class Hashtag: #VCUPRSM)
Office hours: Mondays & Tuesdays, 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. or by appointment

Course Details

Class home page: blackboard.vcu.edu
Class hours: Mondays, 4:00-6:40 p.m.
Classroom: Temple 1137

Course Description

Social media has and is continuing to transform how businesses and organizations interact with their publics. Communications professionals entering the industry today must have working knowledge of how these platforms may be used to build trust, motivate customers and engage brand loyalists.

This semester students will learn the strategic and practical fundamentals of today's most widely used platforms including blogging, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and video and photo sharing sites. Students will learn from top industry professionals how social media is impacting journalism, politics, employee communications and more. The class will also cover the importance of mobile technologies, SEO and measurement in building successful social media strategy.

Each student will be expected to establish and maintain a Twitter account, as well as monitoring current events in social media every week. For the midterm project, students will be teaching a social media topic via YouTube video. The class will then participate in a series of Twitter chats to discuss the videos' content. For the final semester-long project, the class will be divided into groups, and each group will create and execute a social media campaign to build an online community. In addition to a written campaign plan, each team will present its completed campaign to be judged by a panel of experts.

Prerequisites

MASC210 (Public Relations) is the prerequisite for this course.

Course Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to learn strategy and tactics to develop and maintain a successful social media campaign as a part of an organization's public relations strategy. Completing work on time, with great attention to accuracy and meeting client or instructor expectations, is an intended learning outcome for this course. A second objective is to learn

about social media by teaching about social media to peers. A third objective of this course is to practice effective teamwork and leadership skills. Effective participation in this case analysis and presentation teams is an intended outcome.

Format Standards for Written Work

Follow these guidelines in order to avoid having points deducted from writing assignments.

- All writing assignments must be uploaded on Blackboard.
- Please submit work in black ink, and use double space unless otherwise note. Use 1–inch margins, **and 12-point serif typeface**, Times New Roman **font**.
- Please use page numbers if more than one page.
- Proofread all your work. Do not rely solely on spell check.
- Always keep a copy of your work.
- Use AP Style on all work.
- References are required in work that includes citations, quotes, or other people’s ideas. Use APA (American Psychological Association) referencing: <http://www.apastyle.org>. If you reference a source, you must include a References page at the end of the document, listing your sources in proper APA format.

Grading

A total of 1000 points can be earned during the semester, as follows:

- Quizzes – 100
- Teaching SM YouTube video – 150
- Teaching SM Twitter Chats – 50
- Secondary Research Paper – 100
- Team Project – 300
- Peer Evaluations – 150
- Hootsuite Certification - 100
- Twitter Engagement and Participation – 50

Final grades in the course will be calculated as follows:

- A = 900 to 1000 points
- B = 800 to 899 points
- C = 700 to 799 points
- D = 600 to 699 points
- F = 599 points or below

There is no final exam for this course.

Required Texts and Materials

Groundswell, Expanded and Revised Edition: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies by Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff. Other required reading materials will be provided on Blackboard.

Students will also be quizzed on social media current events and case studies based on the below texts and news. Weekly reading of the following outlets is required; subscribing to news feeds or email digests is highly recommended.

- The Next Web (thenextweb.com)
- Mashable (mashable.com)
- PR Daily (prdaily.com)

If you don't have them already, you must establish a public account on Twitter. If you already have a Twitter account or if your tweets are protected, you can establish a new one to keep class content separate from your personal Tweets.

All questions or comments related to the class, materials or assignments must be Tweeted using the hashtag #VCUPRSM and can be retrieved using Twitter search or topsy.com.

Class Web Site

The class Web address is blackboard.vcu.edu. This site is part of the Blackboard course management system. When you go to that address, you will be asked for a user name and password. Your user name is the first part of your VCU e-mail address (the part that appears before the @). Your password is your VCU e-mail password. (If you have forgotten your password, call the VCU Help Desk at 828-2227.) Blackboard will be used as the primary method for posting of grades and all course material.

You must have – and you must use – a VCU e-mail account for this course. If you do not already have an account, you may create one online at blackboard.vcu.edu. You may access your VCU e-mail at <http://webmail.vcu.edu>. (That page also explains how you can have your VCU email automatically forwarded to a Hotmail, Yahoo or American Online account.) After you log in, you will be able to read class announcements and online materials, download lecture notes and other resources, and send e-mail to your classmates and us. Many materials will be available to you ONLY through the site. You will want to check the Blackboard site often. Please log in immediately to make sure your user name and password work.

Please check your VCU e-mail by mid-day on the day of class. In the event of an emergency cancellation, this is one of the only means we will have of notifying you.

Class Attendance and Participation

Attendance will be taken at the start of each class.

All absences are considered unexcused unless you receive prior approval from me to have your absence excused. When you return to class, please bring any documentation to excuse your absence (such as a doctor's note if you were ill).

Your participation grade is highly dependent on whether or not you attend class. Please make every effort to attend all class periods, or let me know ahead of time should you miss a class session. Please note that missing more than two class sessions unexcused will dramatically affect your participation grade, which in turn can affect your final grade for the course.

You will be expected to participate in class discussions, asking questions and sharing ideas. That means you need to come to class prepared: do the reading and the homework before class. It also means you participate within the bounds of what will be class norms:

- Be honest.
- Seek clarification before confusion and conflict.
- Challenge with passion, not poison.
- Be willing to change your point of view.
- Don't walk away, literally or figuratively. Stay in the room.

You are responsible for all work missed and all material covered, even when you are absent, either excused or unexcused.

Deadlines

You would be reprimanded – or even fired – for missing a deadline in a public relations workplace. So this class will teach you not only writing skills but also the workplace skill of meeting deadlines. If you must be absent when work is due, you must turn in your assignment before the start of class on the due date unless you have requested and received an extension.

Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class on the assigned days. Twelve quizzes will be administered. The two lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester. Students are expected to take the quiz on the assigned day. However, if you are not going to be able to attend class on a quiz day, students must notify me before the start of the missed class. Students will be given the opportunity to make up a missed quiz only at the beginning of the next class.

Late work will not be accepted.

Email Policy

Electronic mail or "email" is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective, and environmentally aware manner. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the University as needed. Mail sent to the VCU email address may include notification of University-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety: <http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/3407.html>

VCU Honor System: Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

The VCU honor system policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty, and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to his policy, "members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity." In addition, "All members of the VCU community are presumed to have an understanding of the VCU Honor System and are required to:

- Agree to be bound by the Honor System policy and its procedures;
- Report suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
- Support an environment that reflects a commitment to academic integrity;

- Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System cases, and,
- Maintain confidentiality regarding specific information in Honor System cases.

Most importantly, "All VCU students are presumed upon enrollment to have acquainted themselves with and have an understanding of the Honor System." (The VCU Insider). The Honor System in its entirety can be reviewed on the Web at http://www.provost.vcu.edu/pdfs/Honor_system_policy.pdf or it can be found in the current issue of the VCU Insider at <http://www.students.vcu.edu/insider.html>

In this class, because coursework will be collaborative at times, particular issues of integrity arise. You should not copy or print another student's work without permission. Any material (this includes IDEAS and LANGUAGE) from another source must be credited, whether that material is quoted directly, summarized, or paraphrased. In other words, you should respect the work of others and in no way present it as their own.

Student Conduct in the Classroom

According to the Faculty Guide to Student Conduct in Instructional Settings. "The instructional program at VCU is based upon the premise that students enrolled in a class are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other students. Accordingly, in classrooms, laboratories, studies, and other learning areas, students are expected to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner so that the faculty member can proceed with their [sic] customary instruction. Faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) may set reasonable standards for classroom behavior in order to serve these objectives. If a student believes that the behavior of another student is disruptive, the instructor should be informed." Among other things, cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom. Also, the University Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone from having ".in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university..." For more information, visit the VCU Insider online at <http://www.students.vcu.edu/insider.html>

Certainly the expectation in this course is that students will attend class with punctuality, proper decorum, required course material, and studious involvement.

The VCU Insider contains additional important information about a number of other policies with which students should be familiar, including Guidelines on Prohibition of Sexual Harassment, Grade Review Procedure, and Ethics Policy on Computing. It also contains maps, phone numbers, and information about resources available to VCU students.

Students with Disabilities

SECTION 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended, require that VCU provides "academic adjustments " or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must request them by contacting the Disability Support Services Office (DSS) on the Monroe Park Campus (828-2253) or the Division for Academic Success on the MCV campus (828-9782). More information is available at the Disability Support Services webpage: <http://www.students.vcu.edu/dss/> or the Division for Academic Success webpage at www.specialservices.vcu.edu/disabilityss/.

If you have a disability that requires an academic accommodation, please schedule a meeting with me at your earliest convenience. Additionally, if your coursework requires you to work in a lab environment, you should advise me or department chairperson of any concerns you may have regarding safety issues related to your disability. This statement applies not only to this course but also to every other course in this University.

Statement on Military Short-Term Training or Deployment

Military students may receive orders for short-term training or deployment. These students are asked to inform and present their orders to Military Student Services and to their professor(s). For further information on policies and procedures contact Military Services at 828-5993 or access the corresponding policies at <http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/about/?Default.aspx?uid=10096&iid=30704> and <http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/BULLETINS/undergraduate/?uid=10096&iid=30773>.

Excused Absences for Students Representing the University

Students who represent the university (athletes and others) do not choose their schedules. Student athletes are required to attend games and/or meets. All student athletes should provide their schedule to the instructor at the beginning of the semester. The Intercollegiate Athletic Council (IAC) strongly encourages faculty to treat missed classes or exams (because of a scheduling conflict) as excused absences and urges faculty to work with the students to make up the work or exam.

Campus Emergency Information

What to Know and Do To Be Prepared for Emergencies at VCU:

- Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify>). Keep your information up-to-date. Within the classroom, the professor will keep his or her phone on to receive any emergency transmissions.
- Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
- Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities. Within the classroom, follow your professor's instructions.
- Know where to go for additional emergency information (<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>).
- Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

Important Dates

Important dates for the Spring 2014 semester are available at:

http://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/calendar/ac_fullViewAll.asp?term=Spring+2014

VCU Mobile

The VCU Mobile application is a valuable tool to get the latest VCU information on the go. The application contains helpful information including the VCU directory, events, course schedules, campus maps, athletics and general VCU news, emergency information, library resources,

Blackboard and more. To download the application on your smart phone or for more information, please visit <http://m.vcu.edu>.

Class Registration Required for Attendance

Please remember that students may only attend those classes for which they have registered. Faculty may not add students to class rosters. Therefore, if students are attending a class for which they have not registered, they must stop attending.

Withdrawal from Classes

Before withdrawing from classes, students should consult their instructor as well as other appropriate university offices. Withdrawing from classes may negatively impact a student's financial aid award and his or her semester charges. To discuss financial aid and the student bill, visit the Student Services Center at 1015 Harris Hall or contact a financial aid counselor at <http://www.enrollment.vcu.edu/finaid/contact.html>

Student Financial Responsibility

Students assume the responsibility of full payment of tuition and fees generated from their registration and all charges for housing and dining services, and other applicable miscellaneous charges.

Course Calendar

Please Note: The calendar is subject to change. Additional reading assignments on Blackboard.

Date	Lecture/Discussion	In-Class Activity	Assignments Due
Monday, Jan. 12	Course overview Project explanation Review pre-course survey results Evolution of social media	Selection of work teams and initial work time to identify project topic	
Monday, Jan. 19	<i>University closed: no class</i>		
Monday, Jan. 26	Social media in our lives Social media today	Group work	Reading: ▪ Groundswell: Chapters 1 & 2 Quiz 1
Monday, Feb. 2	Social media strategy	Group work	Reading: ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 3 Quiz 2
Monday, Feb. 9	Content calendars and planning	Group work	Reading: ▪ Groundswell: Chapters 4 & 5 Quiz 3
Monday, Feb. 16	Research and	Group work	Reading:

	environmental scanning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 6 Quiz 4
Monday, Feb. 23	Engagement best practices Search engine optimization	Group work	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 7 Quiz 5 Secondary Research Paper Due
Monday, Mar. 2	Monitoring, measurement and ROI Evaluation	Guest speaker: Britt Farrar	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 8 Quiz 6
Monday, Mar. 9	<i>No class, enjoy your spring break! ☺</i>		
Monday, Mar. 16	Health communication and social media	Group work	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 9 Quiz 7
Monday, Mar. 23	Social media and journalism	Guest speaker: Marcus Messner	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 10 Quiz 8
Monday, Mar. 30	External communication and SM promotion	Guest speaker	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 11 Quiz 9
Monday, Apr. 6	Issues management/crisis communication	Guest speaker: Adam Crowe	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 12 Quiz 10
Monday, Apr. 13	Your career in social media	Guest speaker: Jason Mollica	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 13 Quiz 11
Monday, Apr. 20	Wrap-up class	Group work	Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groundswell: Chapter 14 Quiz 12
Monday, Apr. 27	Final project presentations		

