

# College of Professional Studies

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

**Master's in Strategic Public Relations**  
PSPR 6207: Sustainability Communications  
Spring 2022 - 3 Credits

## Basic Information & Resources

---

### Instructor: Eileen Yu-Chen Lin

Eileen Yu-Chen Lin is a Director of Partnership Development at KABOOM!, a national nonprofit that works to end playspace inequity by uniting with communities to build kid-designed playspaces. Before that, Eileen joined VoteAmerica to build alliances with the private sector in the 2020 General Election that resulted in historical voter turnout. Eileen also served as a Senior Corporate Engagement Advisor for Global Cities at The Nature Conservancy where she mobilized companies to support and implement nature-based solutions that build resilient cities. Previously, Eileen led strategic communications for United Way Worldwide where she worked closely with multinational corporations to share the impact of their corporate responsibility initiatives in areas of education, income and health. Eileen started off her career in the public and the private sector before transitioning to her decade-long nonprofit career to focus on social impact. Eileen is passionate about social justice and believes we can all work together to make our society and planet better.

Eileen is originally from Taiwan and now lives with her family in Washington D.C. She studied Foreign Affairs and East Asian Studies at the University of Virginia, and has a master's degree in Strategic Public Relations from George Washington University.

### Contact Information

Mobile: 571.314.4660 (you may text or call)

Email Address: [eileen.lin@gmail.com](mailto:eileen.lin@gmail.com)

## Course Details

---

### Course Description and Overview

This course will help you learn the strategic roles and purposes of corporate social responsibility (CSR)--essentially "doing well by doing good"—and how public relations aligns with it. This will be accomplished through lectures, readings and research, independent learning, group discussions, and access to leading practitioners of CSR communications.

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) movement—more recently referred to as Corporate Sustainability—is a worldwide phenomenon and corporations, trade associations, and non-profits are being asked to be accountable to a whole new group of stakeholders. Public relations and communications professionals are the logical people to prepare strategic communications and operational plans that reflect their organization's commitment to CSR and enhance their employers' reputations. To not do so is at best a missed opportunity and in the worst case you risk exposing your organization to the harsh glare of the public spotlight.

This course will examine the global CSR movement, explore the unique communications challenges it presents, and offer practical suggestions and tactics to respond to this trend. We will utilize case studies,

professional insights, and academic and industry research to explore the topic and develop a comprehensive CSR communications strategy as the final project for the class.

## Course Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the history of CSR and how it is applied in current day communications.
2. Gain an understanding of the scope of CSR issues.
3. Develop a multi-stakeholder perspective in viewing CSR issues.
4. Explore the connections among strategy and CSR.
5. Critique current CSR activity by others from a knowledgeable perspective,
6. Analyze and recommend CSR activities and communication strategies for companies, organizations or individuals.

## Program Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this Master's program, students will have obtained an enhanced understanding and skills in:

1. Understanding the fundamentals of effective, strategic communications;
2. Applying best practices for writing, media relations and strategic communications planning and implementation;
3. Developing leadership in communications on a sound ethical and financial basis;
4. Leading the implementation of strategic communications strategies.

## Required Text and Learning Materials

- Argenti, P. A. (2016). *Corporate Responsibility*. Thousand Oaks, CA. SAGE Publications.
  - ISBN 978-1483383101.
  - Free ebook available: <https://sk-sagepub-com.proxygw.wrlc.org/books/corporate-responsibility>
- Chandler, D. (2019). *Strategic corporate social responsibility: Sustainable value creation*. SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
  - ISBN 978-1544351575.
- Cialdini, R. (2008). *INFLUENCE: Science and Practices. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Allyn and Bacon.
  - ISBN 978-0205609994.

Note: Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard on a timely basis during the semester. It is your responsibility to check Blackboard regularly to access these additional materials.

## Evaluation and Grading

This course will include the following types of assessment. Descriptions of each assessment can be found on Blackboard.

Assessments will contribute toward the student's grade based on the following chart:

Assignment Category	Weight
Participation, Discussion & Presentation	30%
Assignments	20%
Midterm Project	25%
Final Communications Plan	25%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

### Participation, Discussion & Presentation

Each class is consisted of 3 points based on your participation, discussion and presentation in class. 3 pts x 10 classes = 30 pts.

### Assignments, Midterm Project & Final Communications Plan

Weekly written assignments will be graded according to the quality of the analysis, critical thinking, and writing demonstrated by the student. The weekly assignments constitute 20 pts + 25 pts for midterm + 25 pts for final communications plan for a total of 70 pts. All written assignments are due on Saturdays at 12pm ET.

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Assignment	SDG	Issue Area memo	True Cost Docu	Cialdini memo	Midterm project	Racial Justice Docu	Press Release	n/a	Final comms plan	Top 10 takeaway
Points	3	3	3	3	25	3	3	0	25	2

Note: all papers are subject to review by SafeAssign to determine proper sourcing and assure original work by students.

Formatting: Please use APA style for written assignments and citations (12pt, Times New Roman/Arial, Double-spaced font; include in-text citations and a references list). Graduate school level spelling, grammar, and composition are expected.

### Late Submission Policy

Late submissions are not encouraged in this class that moves quickly within a ten-week timeframe. If you anticipate an absolutely unavoidable delay in meeting the deadline for a discussion forum post or the responses or for submitting an assignment, you must notify your professor in advance of the deadline with an explanation for consideration. In most cases, late submissions will be marked down 10% (out of 100%) per each day late. Anything more than two (2) days late will not be accepted. Only under extenuating circumstances with documentation may you be granted any exception to this policy.

See Course Schedule below for timeline of discussions and assignments due each week of the course.

## Tentative Course Schedule

---

The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar. Final dates and details will be found on the Blackboard course site.

Date	Topic	Readings & Videos	Assignments
Week 1: 1/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corporate responsibility 101</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Argenti (2016) Part I, Chapter 1, An Introduction to Corporate Responsibility, pp 1–39; Chapter 2, The Business Case for CR, pp. 41-44 (read until “Perceived Barriers...”)</li> <li><a href="#">What Is Shared Value?</a></li> <li><a href="#">Shareholder Value is No Longer Everything</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written assignment: Research and identify a company that has been a champion for your assigned SDG goals and write 1~2 paragraphs to nominate the company for an SDG Award for a specific category.</li> <li>Presentation: Prepare a presentation on your assigned SDG goals for next class.</li> </ul>
Week 2: 1/17 (National Holiday – Substitute Date TBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The driving forces of CSR</li> <li>Power of partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chandler (2019). Ch. 2, The Driving Forces of CSR, pp. 21 – 38</li> <li>Argenti (2020). When Should Your Company Speak Up About A Social Issue? (PDF available on BB electronic reserve)</li> <li>Cone Communications Purpose Study 2018 (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written assignment: Write a 250-word memo to your Chief Impact Officer making a communications suggestion regarding an issue area of your choice (e.g. racial justice, food insecurity, etc.).</li> <li>Presentation: share your written assignment with the class.</li> </ul>
Week 3 1/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental Sustainability</li> <li>Discuss midterm project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watch the documentary <a href="#">“The True Cost”</a> (available on Amazon Prime Video).</li> <li>Argenti (2016) Ch. 3, Environmental Responsibility, pp. 76-99</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written assignment: Based on “The True Cost” documentary, write a 250-word memo on ways you can transform the sustainability of fashion industry’s business practice.</li> <li>Presentation: Research and share an environmental problem that is created by a specific sector.</li> <li>Midterm topic approval by email.</li> </ul>

Date	Topic	Readings & Videos	Assignments
Week 4 1/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cause marketing</li> <li>• Corporate Philanthropy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cialdini (2008) whole book</li> <li>• Argenti (2016) Ch. 8, Corporate Philanthropy, pp. 251-272</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written assignment: Based on the Cialdini book, write a 500-word memo by picking a real-life example on how you can integrate the theories from the book. Be sure to answer 5W1H: (1) WHY the behavioral change is needed (problem statement)? (2) WHO is the audience? (3) HOW are you implementing it (draw from the book)? (4) WHEN is the timeframe/timeline (5) WHERE can you implement it? (6) WHAT are the outcomes you are trying to achieve? (3 pts)</li> <li>• Presentation: share your written assignment with the class.</li> </ul>
Week 5 2/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social innovation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Innovate and scale: a tough balancing act</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and innovation – the drivers of business growth?</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midterm due.</li> </ul>
Week 6 2/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity, inclusion and Equity</li> <li>• Corporate Ethics</li> <li>• Discuss final communications plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Porter Novelli (2021) Business and Social Justice Study (PDF available on BB electronic reserves).</li> <li>• Black Wall Street Times. (2020). 1921 Commission Receives \$1 Million Grant from Bank of America for Greenwood Rising (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> <li>• Argenti (2016) Ch. 7, Corporate Ethics, pp. 228-246 (omit MBA Oath and MBA Curricula).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written assignment: Choose 1 documentary from <a href="#">this list</a> and write a 250-word memo on your learning and a recommendation to your company on how to address racial justice.</li> <li>• Presentation: share your midterm project with the class.</li> <li>• Final communications plan topic approval by email.</li> </ul>

Date	Topic	Readings & Videos	Assignments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brown. (2020). Corporate Social Investment can Power an Inclusive Future (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> <li>• <a href="#">Corruption Perceptions Index 2019</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">B Corps: Be the Change</a></li> </ul>	
<p>Week 7: 2/21 (National Holiday – Substitute Date TBD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midterm presentation</li> <li>• Campaign management and metrics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He &amp; Harris. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on corporate social responsibility and marketing philosophy. Journal of Business Research, 116 (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> <li>• Kramer, M. (2020). Coronavirus is putting corporate social responsibility to the test. Harvard Business Review, April 1 (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> <li>• Butte-Dahl + Sachs. (2020). 4 ways companies can thrive in the COVID-19 economy. Fortune, 6/3/2020 (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written assignment: Write a press release in response to your cruise company’s recent incident with covid outbreak.</li> <li>• Presentation: share your written assignment with the class.</li> </ul>
<p>Week 8: 2/28</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating CSR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Argenti (2016) Ch. 9, Communicating CSR, pp. 286-302.</li> <li>• Red Havas. (2020). COVID-19’s Impact on Sustainability: 3 Trends in Media Coverage (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> <li>• Award-Winning CSR Reporting, 2020, 2019 (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No assignment. Work on final communications plan.</li> </ul>

Date	Topic	Readings & Videos	Assignments
Week 9: 3/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementing a CSR Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Argenti (2016) Ch. 10, Implementing a CR Strategy, pp. 317-338.</li> <li>Page and Parnell. (2020). Strategic Communication Planning (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final communications plan due.</li> <li>Presentation: share your final communications plan with the class.</li> </ul>
Week 10: 3/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bringing It All Together</li> <li>Final communications plan presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reputation Institute. How to build credibility through corporate responsibility (PDF available on BB electronic reserve).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written assignment: Top 10 takeaway from the class.</li> </ul>

## Expectations and Responsibilities

---

### Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site regularly throughout the semester to review weekly course content, view announcements, and submit assignments. Students can access the course site through [GWU Blackboard](#).

Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or the [IT Blackboard web page](#).

Please note that your access to this course on Blackboard will continue for one month after the course ends. If you wish to keep any work or materials, you must download or save them before the course.

### Technology Requirements

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the required technology to fully participate in this course. The minimum technology requirements for learning online at GW are outlined on the [Technical Requirements and Support](#) web page.

If you have any problems with the technology in this course, you can seek technological support from GW in a variety of ways, outlined on the [IT Support](#) website.

GW is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment that is accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities.

The following links provide more information about the accessibility of technologies may be used in this course:

- [Blackboard accessibility](#)
- [Microsoft Office accessibility](#)
- [Adobe accessibility](#)
- [Vimeo accessibility](#)
- [YouTube accessibility](#)

If you have any issues regarding the accessibility of the technology used in this course, please contact your instructor. You may also explore the [Disability Support Services](#) website.

## Technology Expectations

Regarding technology skills, you should be able to:

- Create documents and presentation slides
- Use a webcam and microphone
- Use a digital camera or scanner
- Upload files, including recordings and images
- Be open to learning new technologies
- Be flexible when technological glitches happen (which is a given)
- Seek technological help when necessary by contacting the Division of Information Technology

If you have any problems with the technology expectations in this course, please contact your instructor.

## Getting Started

Everything you need to get started in the course is contained within the Blackboard course site. You can use the menu links on the left side panel to view different components. The content for each learning unit is divided into folders—one for each week. More unit folders will unlock as weeks in the course progress.

## Participation Policy

All students are expected to learn and contribute by being a positive participant in discussions, activities, presentations, and assignments. If you have an unavoidable conflict or become ill, in a way that will affect your participation in a given week, please notify your instructor immediately.

Please remember, ***attendance does not constitute participation***. To receive credit for class participation, students must come prepared to each class, actively engage in the discussions and add to or suggest concepts or ideas relevant to the topic under discussion.

## Grading Scale

Following is the grade scale for all CPS classes:

Grade	Range	Grade Standard
A	94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.
A-	90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+	87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B	83-86	Good work, but needs reworking and more effort.
B-	80-82	You've completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+	77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.



Grade	Range	Grade Standard
C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C-	70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F	Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

## Netiquette

Given the pandemic, we will likely conduct classes virtually. Please observe the following rules of netiquette for communicating online:

- Remain professional, respectful, and courteous at all times.
- Remember that a real human being wrote each post and will read what you write in response. It is easy to misinterpret discussion posts. Let's give the benefit of the doubt.
- If you have a strong opinion on a topic, it is acceptable to express it as long as it is not phrased as an attack. Please be gracious with differing opinions.
- When upset, wait a day or two prior to posting. Messages posted (or emailed) in anger are often regretted later.
- Proofread and use the spell check tool when you type a post. It makes the post easier to read and helps your readers understand what you are saying.

Your instructor reserves the right to delete any post that is deemed inappropriate for the discussion forum, blog, or wiki without prior notification to the student. This includes any post containing language that is offensive, rude, profane, racist, or hateful. Posts that are seriously off-topic or serve no purpose other than to vent frustration will also be removed.

## Credit Hour Policy

This is a 10-week, 3-credit course. More information about GWU's credit hour policy can be found at [the Office of the Provost's Policies](#) web page (Under: Assignment of Credit Hour Policy).

## University Policies & Services

---

### Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For details and complete code, see [GW's Code of Academic Integrity](#).

### Copyright Statement

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.

The Copyright Act (17 U.S.C. § 10) governs the rights attributed to owners of copyrighted work. Under certain circumstances, educational institutions may provide copies of copyrighted works to students. The copies may not be copied nor used for any other purpose besides private study, scholarship, or research. Users should not provide electronic copies of any materials provided on this course's Blackboard site to

unauthorized users. If a user fails to comply with Fair Use restrictions, he/she may be held liable for copyright infringement. No further transmission or electronic distribution is permitted.

## University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays

Students must notify faculty as early as possible, but no later than three weeks prior to the absence, of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. If the holiday falls in the first three weeks of class, the student must inform the faculty within the first week of the semester that they are enrolled in the course.

To the greatest extent possible, faculty must continue to extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.

Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday must arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities.

For the full text of the policy and calendar of religious holidays, please see [the Office of the Provost's Policies](#) web page (Religious Holidays document).

## Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services. They can be contacted by phone at 202-994-8250 or in person at Rome Hall, 801 22nd Street, NW, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information visit the [Disability Support Services](#) website.

## Counseling and Psychological Services

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. For additional information call 202-994-5300 or visit the [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) website.

## The Writing Center

The Writing Center is located in Gelman Library at 2130 H St NW in Suite 221 and they can be reached at 202-994-3765 or via email at [gwriter@gwu.edu](mailto:gwriter@gwu.edu). You can [schedule writing center appointments](#), both in-person or by phone, in advance. Daytime and evening hours are available. Check for this semester's hours at the [writing center contact page](#). The Writing Center does offer Summer hours.

## GWU Libraries

Off campus students have full access to all of the research resources, services, and assistance that the Library offers. The GW community has access to 500+ online subscription databases and to millions of items, electronic and print, in the library catalog. Off-campus students even have additional privileges because the Library will FedEx print materials to your home. For more information visit the [GW Libraries](#) homepage.

Call the Ask Us desk at 202-994-6048 or [contact someone at the library](#) to answer any questions. For questions beyond "Do you have this book/article?" and "How do I login?" use the website mentioned to make a research consultation appointment with a librarian. Librarians are there to guide students through any aspect of the research process, from selecting and narrowing a topic, crafting a research strategy to citation management.

## Safety and Security

- In an emergency: call GWPD at 202-994-6111 or call 911
- For situation-specific actions: review the [Emergency Response Handbook](#)
- In an active violence situation: [Get Out, Hide Out or Take Out](#)
- Stay informed: review [notification tools for staying informed during emergency and safety related situations](#)