

**COMM 2580: Strategic Communication Theory & Practice**

University of Utah, Spring 2023, 3 Credits

Online (Asynchronous) via Canvas

Professor: Kevin Coe  
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Office Hours: By appointment

Graduate Teaching Assistants: Alyssa Hill and Carlos Pelayo

**Course Description**

COMM 2580 introduces students to strategic communication theory and practice, which are key elements of several professions (e.g., public relations, advertising, marketing, health promotion, political campaign management). Students will learn strategic communication basics from different perspectives (e.g., marketing, advertising, public relations), while also becoming familiar with foundational research in persuasion and social influence (e.g., consistency theories, loci of persuasion). The course prepares students for professional practice and/or advanced study in strategic communication. COMM 2580 is also useful for students interested in pursuing an MBA, MPP, MPH, JD, or PhD.

**Learning Objectives**

- Identify key publics and target markets
- Craft meaningful goals and strategies
- Identify suitable metrics for evaluation
- Utilize databases and perform basic evaluation
- Understand foundational strategic communication theories

**Required Texts**

No textbook is required for this course; readings will be made available on Canvas as necessary.

**Assignments & Grading**

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>% of Final Course Grade</i>
Module 1 Exam	20%
Module 2 Exam	20%
Module 3 Exam	20%
Module 4 Exam	20%
Engagement Assignments	20% (5% for each of 4 assignments)

Course grades will be determined by the (weighted) average of the four exams (each graded on a 100% scale) and the four engagement assignments (each graded Complete/Incomplete), according to the following scale:

A 93 or above	B 83 – 86	C 73 – 76	D 63 – 66
A- 90 – 92	B- 80 – 82	C- 70 – 72	D- 60 – 62
B+ 87 – 89	C+ 77 – 79	D+ 67 – 69	E 59 or below

Please note that grades are not curved or otherwise adjusted at the aggregate level. However, students who score lower than 50% on an exam will be assigned a grade of 50%, so that one low score does not too severely jeopardize their chance of passing the course. However, cheating or failing to take an exam will result in a score of 0%.

### **Student Conduct**

All students will be strictly held to the standards of conduct and academic integrity set forth in the University's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Students are advised to carefully review this code (see <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>).

### **COVID-19 Considerations**

This is a fully online course, so there is little likelihood of in-person contact. In the event that such contact becomes necessary, however, please consult the University of Utah's COVID-19 resource page (<https://coronavirus.utah.edu>) for guidance.

### **Adding the Course**

In most cases, the automated waitlist is used to add students to this course. In cases where that is not possible, students can request a permission code from me during the first week of class; I will provide one if circumstances allow. I do not add students after the first week of class.

### **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

Consistent with the stated values of the University of Utah (see <https://diversity.utah.edu>), this course strives to well serve students from all backgrounds—an approach that enriches the educational experience of the entire university community. Accordingly, I will work to present materials that are respectful of diversity along the lines of, for example, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, age, religion, and socioeconomic status. Any suggestions you have along these lines are always welcome.

### **Department of Communication Anti-Racist Code of Conduct**

The Department of Communication Anti-Racist Code of Conduct (ARCC) is a collective commitment by faculty, staff, and students in the Department of Communication. We aim to create an intersectional anti-racist departmental culture in which members are active bystanders who identify and interrupt racism in all forms, including discriminatory actions such as

microaggressions, microassaults, and microinsults. The ARCC empowers all members of the Department to create a safe, welcoming, and equitable learning and work environment. Read the [full ARCC here](#).

## **Disability and Access**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access (CDA), 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020. CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to CDA.

## **Names and Pronouns**

The class rosters I receive default to the “preferred first name” entered by the student in the Student Profile section of their CIS account (which can be updated at any time). I want to refer to you by whatever name and pronoun you choose, so please feel free to alert me of any name or pronoun changes at any time.

## **Content Accommodation**

The University recognizes that students’ sincerely-held core beliefs may make it difficult for students to fulfill some requirements of some courses or majors. The University assumes no obligation to ensure that all students are able to complete any major. It is the student’s obligation to determine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student’s sincerely-held core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a content accommodation. If such accommodations are desired, students should carefully review the university policy (see <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>) and consult with me, keeping in mind that I am unlikely to grant such requests because I carefully selected each piece of course content for its specific pedagogical value.

## **Campus Safety and Student Wellness**

Your safety and mental health are top priorities. To report suspicious activity, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit [safeu.utah.edu](https://safeu.utah.edu). I know that personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, and the like can interfere with your ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at [www.wellness.utah.edu](https://www.wellness.utah.edu) or 801-581-7776.

## Addressing Sexual Misconduct

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (135 Park Building, 801-581-8365) or to the Office of the Dean of Students (270 Union Building, 801-581-7066). For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness (426 SSB, 801-581-7776). To report to the police, call the Department of Public Safety at 801-585-2677. Please note that university policy dictates that professors are "mandated reporters," meaning that if you disclose instances of sexual misconduct to me I am required to report it to the university.

## Course Calendar

*This schedule is tentative. Any changes will be announced on Canvas.*

<b>Course Introduction (Jan. 9 – Jan. 15)</b>		
Welcome to the semester. During this portion of the class, you should read this syllabus, read the FAQs on Canvas, familiarize yourself with the course assignments and expectations, and contact Prof. Coe if you have any questions.		
<b>Module 1: Strategic Communication &amp; Marketing (Jan. 16 – Feb. 5)</b>		
Lecture 1.1	Introduction to Strategic Communication & Marketing	Overview of strat comm perspectives; Marketing mix; Pricing and assortment
Lecture 1.2	Segmentation & Targeting	Principles of market segmentation and targeting
Lecture 1.3	Secondary Research	Finding and using marketing data
Lecture 1.4	Positioning	Principles of brand/product positioning
Lecture 1.5	Evaluation & Metrics	Marketing metrics
<i>*Complete both the Engagement Assignment and the Exam for this module by 11:59pm on Feb. 5*</i>		
<b>Module 2: Strategic Communication &amp; Branding (Feb. 6 – Feb. 26)</b>		
Lecture 2.1	Introduction to Strategic Comm & Branding	Creating brands; Differentiation and extension
Lecture 2.2	Brand Stories	Recovering the history of a brand
Lecture 2.3	Primary Research	Original data collection
Lecture 2.4	Innovation	Invention vs. innovation; Diffusion of innovations
Lecture 2.5	The Evolution of Brands	Digital strategies; Adapting to new environments
<i>*Complete both the Engagement Assignment and the Exam for this module by 11:59pm on Feb. 26*</i>		
<b>Please note: There is no expectation of course activity from Feb. 27 – Mar. 12</b>		

<b>Module 3: Strategic Communication &amp; Public Relations (Mar. 13 – Apr. 2)</b>		
Lecture 3.1	Introduction to Relational Strategic Communication	Trust; RACE model; History of public relations
Lecture 3.2	Gaining Compliance	Compliance strategies; Inoculation theory
Lecture 3.3	Using the Crowd	Crowdsourcing; Kickstarter
Lecture 3.4	Personality	Big 5 personality traits; Sensation seeking
Lecture 3.5	Ethics	Ethical considerations in strat comm
<i>*Complete both the Engagement Assignment and the Exam for this module by 11:59pm on Apr. 2*</i>		
<b>Module 4: Strategic Communication &amp; Persuasion (Apr. 3 – Apr. 23)</b>		
Lecture 4.1	Introduction to Persuasion	Fixed action patterns; Loci of persuasion
Lecture 4.2	Reciprocation	Reciprocation
Lecture 4.3	Commitment & Consistency; Authority	Commitment and Consistency; Authority
Lecture 4.4	Social Proof	Social Proof
Lecture 4.5	Liking; Scarcity	Liking; Scarcity
<i>*Complete both the Engagement Assignment and the Exam for this module by 11:59pm on Apr. 23*</i>		

***Please note that your continued enrollment in this course constitutes an agreement to abide by the policies and procedures explained in this syllabus.***