GHENT UNIVERSITY

Digital Public Relations (A704098)

Course size   *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

   Credits 5.0   **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2024-2025

A (semester 2)	English	Gent	seminar	11.0h
			lecture	11.5h

Lecturers in academic year 2024-2025

Soens, Ellen	LW22	staff member
Claeys, An-Sofie	LW22	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2024-2025	**crdts**	**offering**
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, French)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, German)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Italian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Russian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Spanish)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, English, Turkish)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, French)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, French, German)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, French, Italian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, French, Russian)	5	A
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Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, Italian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, Russian)	5	A
Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, Spanish)	5	A

Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages(main subject Dutch, Turkish)	5	A
Postgraduate Certificate Dutch as a Foreign Language and Applied Communication(main subject Level of Dutch: CEFR B2)	5	A
Postgraduate Certificate Dutch as a Foreign Language and Applied Communication(main subject Level of Dutch: CEFR C1)	5	A
Postgraduate Certificate Computer-Assisted Language Mediation	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Digital communication, public relations, internal communication, external communication, corporate communication, social media, crisis communication

Position of the course

The course 'Digital public relations' familiarizes students with the strategic use of digital media for the internal and external communication of organizations. When organizations apply digital media strategically, they can strengthen or repair their relationship with internal as well as external stakeholders. These same stakeholders can use digital media to put pressure on the reputation of companies or help build it together.

Employees can turn into brand ambassadors and shape their organization's conversational human voice through social media or defend the company in times of crisis. At the same time, employers often tend to see the risks associated with social media in the workplace. They fear cyberloafing, criticism or leaks of confidential information. For external communication, social media offer an indispensable tool, in addition to more traditional press releases and press conferences, to engage in a dialogue with stakeholders and to monitor conversations about the organization or sector. At the same time, well-intended social media campaigns can become the victim of hashtag hijacking. In the context of crisis communication, social media offer a way to monitor issues, to determine the sentiment among the public, and to address stakeholders without traditional media functioning as gatekeepers. At the same time, however, those same social media oftentimes start new crises, not every organization can spend the same amount of effort to communication via social media, and it can be hard to predict the outcome of a message on social media.

Digital media can therefore be considered a two-sided sword within public relations. In this course, students will learn to maximize the advantages of digital media for internal and external communication and limit the risks. The classes encompass both a theoretical component, in which students learn how to apply digital media strategically for public relations, and a practical component, in which skills will be taught.

Contents

The course 'Digital public relations' familiarizes students with the most important theories, concepts and strategies within the area of digital corporate communication. Both the internal and external communication of organizations will be discussed. In addition, students learn to apply theory to practice through insights from guest speakers, specific cases and assignments.

With regard to external communication, we discuss concepts like conversational human voice, dialogue in public relations and the role of authenticity in the communication via social media. In addition, explicit attention is paid to crisis communication, because digital media can be both cause and solution during times of organizational distress.

With regard to internal communication, students will learn how organizations can best formulate social media guidelines in order to maximize the opportunities of employees' work-related social media use (e.g., corporate ambassadorship) and to minimize the risks (e.g., cyberloafing, leaking confidential information). We also consider, however, the potential impact of social media on employees' work-life balance. Students additionally learn how to develop an effective employee ambassador program. Finally, we discuss the ways in which communication professionals can use AI in the diverse domains of public relations through insights from both academic research and practice.

Initial competences

The student has a good command of English.

Final competences

1 Explain the most important theories and concepts within the area of digital public relations.
2 Predict the impact of digital strategies for internal and external corporate communication.
3 Evaluate digital PR-campaigns.
4 Apply theoretical insights regarding strategies for digital public relations to specific cases.
5 Develop a theoretically underpinned social media policy for employees.
6 Develop digital communication actions.
7 Develop an employee ambassador campaign.
8 Use digital media to assess the impact of a crisis on the reputation of an organization.
9 Select effective strategies to limit the impact of a crisis.
10 Critically evaluate digital information sources in terms of relevance, reliability, and validity in a public relations context.

Conditions for credit contract

This course unit cannot be taken via a credit contract

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Classes, seminar, self-reliant study activities

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Slides
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Reader
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Available on Ufora : Yes

References

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Course content-related study coaching

Interactive support via UFORA and during classes. Individual and collective

feedback during classes, via e-mail or via UFORA.

Assessment moments

continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Presentation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

First session:
Besides the assignments and presentations, the (permanent) evaluation is based
on attendance and participation during classes.
Group assignments accompanied by presentations.
Individual assignments about themes discussed during classes.
Second session:
Same, group assignments can be altered to an individual assignment.

Calculation of the examination mark

Group assignments (40%), individual assignments (50%), permanent evaluation of
cooperation and approach to cases during classes (10%).
In order to pass, students need to participate in at least 80% of all evaluations and
obligatory activities such as guest lectures. If this condition is not met, any passing
score will be reduced to 9/20. In case of legitimate absence, an individual
assignment can be fulfilled instead.
The partial marks of assignments for which the student passed during the first
session, will be transferred to the second session.

Facilities for Working Students

Class attendance is mandatory and will be included in the calculation of the final
score. Possibility of feedback by e-mail or after making an appointment.