Course Approval Packet: 15-Week Graduate Course

Marketing a Message in the Age of AI · Ready-made documents for program directors and curriculum committees. For the 6-week continuing-education version, use the 6-Week Continuing-Education Kit and its two-page Program Description instead.

Most of what a committee asks for is below, written so it can be pasted into your institution's course proposal form. Adapt anything in this packet; it may be shared freely. Items in square brackets are for you to fill in.

Section	What it is
1. Catalog entry	Course title, short title and a 75-word description
2. Rationale and fit	Why the course is needed, where it fits, and what it does not duplicate
3. Curriculum map	Each learning outcome linked to the assignments that assess it
4. Credit hours	The credit-hour justification for 3 semester credits, plus the quarter and continuing-education versions
5. Instructor qualifications	Who can teach it, and the preparation it takes
6. Running it under Special Topics	How to offer it next term, before full approval
7. Note for the research ethics board	Why the course's fieldwork is usually not human-subjects research, and the safeguards built in
8. Resources required	What the institution needs to provide
9. Institutional statements	Placeholders for your own policies

1. Catalog entry

Field	Text
Course title	Marketing a Message in the Age of AI
Short title (for transcripts, up to 30 characters)	Marketing a Message: AI Age (or: Mktg a Message in Age of AI)
Credits	3 semester credits (15 weeks). Variants: 3 quarter credits (12 weeks); 1.5 CEUs (6-week continuing-education version)
Level	Graduate. Suitable as an elective in nonprofit management, public administration, strategic communication and marketing programs
Prerequisites	None. Experience in communications, fundraising or program work is helpful
Description (75 words)	How organizations with a message get found, trusted and joined, and keep the people who join, now that AI assistants increasingly answer first. Students diagnose what holds an organization back, audit how search engines and AI assistants describe it, separate its own voice from independent corroboration, map the routes to participation, and run an honest test. Teams work all semester with a real partner and deliver a 90-day plan.

2. Rationale and fit

Why the course is needed

Organizations with a message, those that exist to help people understand, adopt or act on an idea, are now judged by AI assistants before most people reach their websites. An assistant that cannot read an organization's pages, finds only its critics, or places it in the wrong category will describe it inaccurately or leave it out. Few courses address this, and those that do treat it as a technical matter for products and retailers.

Standard marketing courses assume a product that is bought, a customer who decides quickly, and success measured in sales. A message is taken up over time, its standing rests on trust, and success is measured in changed behavior. Graduates who will lead communications for foundations, public agencies and causes need methods built on those differences.

Where it fits

- **Nonprofit management and public administration:** an applied elective on communications and public engagement, with a real client.
- **Strategic communication:** a course on discovery, credibility and measurement in an AI-mediated environment.
- **Marketing:** an elective on social marketing and mission-driven organizations.
- **Continuing education and certificates:** the 6-week version, for practitioners working on their own organization.

What it does not duplicate

The course is not a course in search engine optimization, social media management or advertising, though it touches all three. It teaches diagnosis before spending, honest evidence, and measurement on the right rung, and it refuses tactics that rely on pressure or volume. It complements courses in nonprofit management, program evaluation and communication campaigns, and does not replace an introductory marketing course.

Evidence of learning

Seven assignments on one partner organization, graded on a shared four-criterion rubric (evidence, right rung, fidelity, usability), with a confidential peer evaluation adjusting team grades. The capstone is presented to the partner, who is invited to attend.

3. Curriculum map

Each learning outcome from the syllabus, with the assignments that assess it. RR is the weekly reading responses.

Learning outcome	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	RR
1. Explain how marketing a message differs from marketing a product, and why intuition is an unreliable guide in both						●		●
2. Diagnose what holds an organization back before recommending any spending	●						●	
3. State an organization's outcome, promise and positioning in words a stranger understands and its founder or teacher would recognize		●						●
4. Assess how search engines and AI assistants find, describe and cite an organization, and recommend changes			●				●	
5. Distinguish the organization's own voice from independent corroboration, and plan how to earn it and answer critics openly				●			●	●
6. Map the routes from first encounter to participation, and find dead ends, leaks and pressure					●		●	
7. Design measures on the right rung and run an honest test whose result could change a decision						●	●	●
8. Write a 90-day plan that a real organization could adopt							●	

A1 Diagnosis memo · A2 Promise and positioning brief · A3 Search and AI audit · A4 Corroboration and critics map · A5 Route map and pressure audit · A6 Live test · A7 90-day plan and presentation

For a program-level map, the course most often supports program outcomes in communication, stakeholder engagement, ethical practice, data-informed decision making and applied work with a client organization.

4. Credit-hour justification

For the 15-week version (3 semester credits). The course meets in one 2.5-hour session a week for 15 weeks: 37.5 clock hours of direct instruction, equivalent to 45 fifty-minute class hours. Students complete about 6 hours of work outside class each week, 90 hours in all: reading, research readings, weekly written responses, and team fieldwork with a partner organization. The total of about 127.5 hours meets the federal definition of a credit hour (34 CFR 600.2): one hour of classroom instruction and at least two hours of out-of-class work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for each credit.

For the 12-week version (3 quarter credits). Twelve 2.5-hour sessions give 30 clock hours of instruction, with about 5 hours of outside work a week (60 hours).

For the 6-week continuing-education version (1.5 CEUs). Six 2.5-hour sessions give 15 contact hours, at the standard rate of one CEU per 10 contact hours. Participants also complete about 4 hours of work a week between sessions, which is not counted toward the CEUs.

Online delivery. The live online format keeps the same weekly contact time. Each week includes scheduled interaction with the instructor and among students, as distance-education rules require.

5. Instructor qualifications

The course suits faculty and practitioners who have done communications work for an organization with a message, or taught it.

- **Graduate-level teaching:** a graduate degree in communication, marketing, nonprofit management, public administration or a related field, or the equivalent professional standing your institution accepts for practitioner faculty.
- **Practice:** experience, ideally five years or more, in communications, fundraising, outreach or program work for a foundation, cause, public agency or similar organization.
- **Comfort with the tools:** regular use of AI assistants and search, and willingness to try each week's exercise before teaching it. No technical background in search engine optimization or coding is required.
- **Supervising fieldwork:** experience supervising student projects with outside clients is helpful, since teams work with real partners.

Preparation it takes

- Reading the book and the syllabus: about 12 hours.
- Recruiting partners: six to eight weeks before the term, using the kit's recruitment letter and partner agreement.
- Each week: about 2 hours to read the week's chapters again, review the slides and speaker notes, and try the exercise.
- Before each term and before week 6: checking the AI-related material against current sources, as listed in the Instructor Guide (about 3 hours).

6. Running it under Special Topics

A new course usually takes a year to pass a curriculum committee. Most programs can offer this one next term under an existing Special Topics or Selected Topics number and propose it as a permanent course after the first run.

1. Check that your program has a Special Topics course with a variable title, at the right level and credit value (usually 3 credits).
2. Submit the course title, the catalog description in section 1 and the syllabus to whoever approves Special Topics offerings: usually the program director, department chair or associate dean.
3. Recruit partner organizations once the offering is approved, six to eight weeks before the term.
4. After the first run, gather student evaluations, partner feedback and samples of student work (with permission). These answer the questions a curriculum committee will ask.
5. Submit the full course proposal, using this packet, for a permanent course number.

Many institutions limit how often the same Special Topics title can run, often to two or three times. Plan the full proposal for the second year.

7. Note for the research ethics board

To: [Institutional Review Board or research ethics office]

Re: Fieldwork in [course number], Marketing a Message in the Age of AI

Students in this course work in teams with a partner organization with a message and produce recommendations for its use. Some assignments involve contact with people:

- **Assignment 2:** short listening interviews, about 20 minutes each, with at least eight people from the partner's audience, arranged with the partner's approval, about why they did or did not take part in its work.
- **Assignment 6:** a test of how the partner presents something (for example, two versions of an email subject line), run by the partner on its own audience, with the team analyzing the results.
- **Throughout:** observation of public websites and of AI assistants' answers, which involves no human participants.

The purpose of this work is to improve one organization's communications and to teach a professional skill, not to contribute to generalizable knowledge. For that reason, we believe it does not meet the definition of research in the Common Rule (45 CFR 46.102). We ask the board to confirm this, or to tell us what review it requires.

Safeguards built into the course

- The partner signs a written agreement setting out what the team may do, with data deleted at the end of the term.
- Interviewees take part voluntarily, are told who the students are and how their words will be used, and can stop at any time. Their notes are anonymized before submission.
- Interviews do not ask about health, finances, religious practice in detail, or other sensitive matters, and do not include anyone under 18.
- Tests are run by the partner on its own communications, as it would in its normal work, and compare only ways of presenting the same thing.
- Teams do not contact the partner's audience directly without the partner's approval, and share findings with the partner first.
- Students may not publish findings or present them outside the course. A student who wants to do so must first apply to the board for review.

Script read at the start of each interview

"Thank you for talking with me. I'm a student at [institution], working with [partner] as part of a course. We want to understand how people find and decide about organizations like this one, so we can suggest improvements. The conversation takes about 20 minutes. You don't have to answer any question, and you can stop at any time. I'll take notes but won't record your name in them, and the notes will be deleted at the end of the term. Is it all right to continue?"

[Signature, title, date]

8. Resources required

- **For students:** the required book (the only cost) and free versions of three or four AI assistants. No software purchase is needed.

- **Library:** access to the research readings, most of which are free. The reading list notes which need a library subscription.
- **Room:** a seminar room with a projector and space for teams to work, or a video meeting platform for the online version.
- **Course materials:** provided at no cost and sent on request to verified instructors at www.sky7media.com/course; the instructor registers the course before teaching with them: syllabus, slides with speaker notes, assignment sheets, rubrics, templates, partner agreement, case pack, instructor guide, and course modules ready to import into Canvas, Moodle, Blackboard or D2L.

9. Institutional statements

Add your institution's standard statements to the syllabus before it goes to students. Both syllabi include these placeholders.

Statement	Placeholder
Academic integrity	[Insert your institution's academic integrity statement and link]
Accessibility and accommodations	[Insert your disability services statement, contact and link]
Use of AI tools	The syllabus includes a course policy: students state which AI tools they used and for what, and a named team member checks every fact and quotation against its source. [Add or replace with your institution's AI policy]
Nondiscrimination and harassment	[Insert your institution's statement and reporting contacts]
Attendance and recording	[Insert your attendance policy and your policy on recording class sessions]
Student support	[Insert counseling, basic-needs and other student support services]