



Seminar 3594
Seminar in Corporate Social Responsibility –
The Role and Function of Communication

Spring Term 2017

Course Objective

The seminar assesses the topic of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in theory and practice. Specifically, it highlights the challenges and opportunities of **communicating** CSR, which are closely linked to the perceived legitimacy of corporate activities. The course will give an overview on the emerging stream of research concerned with CSR communication and focuses on the external and internal dimensions of CSR communication.

The class sessions will be interactive, with emphasis on discussion. Students will be expected to write a seminar paper, hold a presentation, and interact in class.

Learning Outcomes

The course highlights aspects of managing **CSR communication** on the organizational level and sensitizes students for practical and ethical dimensions of CSR communication. Students will develop and present relevant topics of this field and will learn more about ongoing research projects of the Chair of Foundations of Business Administration and Theories of the Firm.

By the end of this course, you should be able to...

1. ...define the concept of CSR and CSR communication.
2. ...explain various theoretical perspectives on CSR communication.
3. ...discuss challenges and opportunities of communicating CSR in- and outside of the organization.
4. ...handle scientific journal articles and assess their scientific value.
5. ...write a structured seminar paper that lives up to scientific standards on a specific research question.



Lecturer

Hannah Trittin

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Administrative Details

Dates: 28.02., 07.03., 14.03., 21.03., 28.03., 04.04., 11.04.2017

(beginning in the second week of the semester)

Time: Tuesdays from 8:00h to 12:00h

Location: Seminarraum UNK-E-2, Universitaetsstr. 84, 8006 Zurich
(Tram-Station Winkelriedstr., Line 9 & 10).

In the first session, the course outline will be presented and students have to sign up for a topic. In order to get credit for the course, students have to hold a presentation to their assigned topic, write a seminar paper, and participate actively in the seminar.

The deadline for the module-booking of this course is **March 17, 2017**. The successful completion of the seminar accounts for **3 ECTS-Points**, which can be credited to MA: BWL 5. The students will be provided access to the reading material at the beginning of the course.

Admission and Participation

A maximum of 14 master students will be admitted to the seminar. To participate, please send an email to hannah.trittin@business.uzh.ch by **February 3, 2017**. The mail should explain, why you want to participate in the seminar (300 words maximum) and include your CV and an updated list of courses you have attended so far). Students will be informed by February 7th, 2017 on whether they are admitted. Late applications will only be considered if vacant places are available after February 10th, 2017. **No admission of spontaneous show-up's in the first class.**

Students who are accepted for the seminar have to book this seminar through the module booking system. Reading material and all documents to this seminar will be shared via OLAT.

Seminar tasks

Participants of this seminar are required to prepare a seminar paper, a presentation in class, and actively contribute to the discussions and interactions in class.

The **seminar paper** constitutes **50%** of the final grade. The main text (without title, list of references, figures, tables, etc.) of the seminar paper should be **15 pages** long (based on 12 point font size, 2.5cm margins on all sides, and 1.5 space lined spacing). Further guidelines will be provided at the beginning of the seminar. In one session of the seminar, each student will be able to discuss his/her seminar paper topic in class.

The deadline for handing in the seminar papers is June 5, 2017. I strongly advise all participants to use the second half of the semester to finish the papers and hand them in before the other exams start. The papers have to be written in English.



The **seminar presentation** constitutes **35%** of the final grade. The presentations on assigned topics are held in teams; all members of a team receive the same grade. Presentations are graded, amongst other, along the ability of the team to engage the audience in an interaction. All teams are asked to present and facilitate class discussions up to 60 minutes. The lecturer will provide material for class discussions for additional 30 minutes.

Mandatory, a pre-final version of each presentation has to be send to Hannah Trittin (hannah.trittin@business.uzh.ch) Thursday before the day of presentation. Each group will receive a feedback on the presentation by the next day.

Further information on seminar papers and presentations will be provided at the beginning of the seminar.

Finally, active oral participation in class constitutes **15%** of the final grade. Each session will be highly interactive: group works, case studies, discussions, exercises. Students must carefully prepare some lectures when announced (e.g., read a text, read a case study).

Grading Weights

Seminar Paper	50%
Presentation	35%
Attendance and participation in class discussion	15%

All questions concerning the seminar can be directed to the lecturer: hannah.trittin@business.uzh.ch

Introductory Literature on How to Write Scientific Papers:

Bänsch, A., & Alewell, D. (2009). **Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten**, München: Oldenbourg.

Huff, A. S. (1999). **Writing for scholarly publication**, Thousand Oaks, USA: Sage.

Huff, A. S. (2009). **Designing research for publication**, London, UK: Sage.

Sachs, S., & Hauser, A. (2002). **Das ABC der betriebswirtschaftlichen Forschung: Anleitung zum wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten**, Zürich: Versus.

Theisen, R. (2012). **Wissenschaftliches Arbeiten: Technik-Methodik-Form** (15. Auflage), München: Vahlen.

For further guidelines on how to write scientific papers, please refer to the download box on our homepage: <http://www.business.uzh.ch/professorships/as/themenliste.html>



Handbooks Related to the Seminar Topics:

- Cornelissen, J. (2008). **Corporate communication. A guide to theory and practice** (2nd edition). London: Sage.
- Crane, A., McWilliams, A., Matten, D., Moon, J., & Siegel, D.S. (2008). **The Oxford handbook of corporate social responsibility**. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Ihlen, Ø., Bartlett, J., & May, S. (2011). **Handbook on communication and corporate social responsibility** (1st edition). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Putnam, L. L., & Mumby, D. (2014). **The SAGE handbook of organizational communication. Advances in theory, research, and methods**. London, UK: Sage
- Scherer, A.G., & Palazzo, G. (2008). **Handbook of research on global corporate citizenship**. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

A Note on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the use of another person's ideas, knowledge, or language without appropriate crediting of the source. Plagiarism is theft of intellectual property, and therefore is a serious offense. It cannot be tolerated in academic work. Any evidence of plagiarism in a student paper will result in a failing grade for the course. It is also inappropriate to use very long quotes from an author even if the material is properly cited and enclosed in quotation marks. Such a practice raises the possibility that students do not really understand the material they are quoting. Ideas should be expressed in the students' own words except for the occasional use of quotations from other sources to highlight or support specific points. For further information see the *Harvard Guide for Using Sources* and its guidelines on avoiding plagiarism: <http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&tabgroupid=icb.tabgroup106849>

Course Outline

In the following you will find the themes we will address during the course. The readings listed under each theme provide you with a preliminary introduction to the literature in that field. The references in italics are for those of you who are interested in an introduction to the topic. I encourage all students to read them before class, reading them will facilitate group discussions in class. The course instructor will provide the references in italics to you. The students preparing the presentations should do further literature research. As a starting point, students can use the introductory references attached to each theme.

The following research questions can guide you in preparing your presentations as well as your papers:



- (1) What is the theoretical/scientific relevance of the phenomenon you study?
- (2) What is the practical relevance of the topic you analyze?
- (3) What are the challenges for multinational corporations or their stakeholders in relation to the topic you analyze?
- (4) What are possible solutions?
- (5) What are theoretical and practical implications that can be derived from these solutions?

Theme 1: Introduction into the Field of CSR and CSR communication: The Implications of Globalization and the Network Society

The seminar will start with a general introduction into the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and particularly CSR communication. An emphasis will be placed on the challenges of globalization and the rise of the network society, and the implications for the multinational corporation. Further, the general themes of the seminar will be introduced and the research program of the Chair of Foundations of Business Administration and Theories of the Firm in relation to issues of CSR will be presented.

References:

- Beck, U. (2000). **What is globalization?** Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Castells, M. (2007). **Communication, power and counter-power in the network society.** International Journal of Communication, 1, 238–266.
- Scherer, A.G., & Palazzo, G. (2008). Globalization and corporate social responsibility. In A. Crane, A. McWilliams, D. Matten, J. Moon & D.S. Siegel (Eds.), **The Oxford handbook of corporate social responsibility** (pp. 413–431). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scherer, A.G., Rasche, A., Palazzo, G., & Spcier, A. (2016). Managing for political corporate social responsibility: New challenges and directions for PCSR 2.0. **Journal of Management Studies**, 53(3): 273–298.

Theme 2: Agenda & How to Conduct a Good Seminar Presentation

In this session you will get an introduction on how to conduct a presentation in our seminar. We will examine the structure and content of a presentation and highlight the important aspects you need to consider when preparing it. We will review what a good presentation is and we will discuss how you can increase the interactivity with the audience during your presentation.



Theme 3: Case Study

A current case study that deals with CSR communication will serve as an introduction to the course. The study will be distributed at the beginning of the seminar and will be discussed in class.

Theme 4: Guest Lecture (TBD)

Theme 5: Theoretical Foundation: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The expanding role of the business corporation in society is discussed in the scholarly literature under the umbrella term of corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR has become a broad field within management research. It evolved into a concept that is discussed from very different theoretical perspectives and that is defined in multiple ways. Recently, this debate has led to stream of research that is dedicated in particular to the role of communication in the context of CSR. In an ongoing globalization process, organizations are faced with changing environmental conditions and growing demands of internal and external stakeholders. The network society enhances the pressure on firms to communicate on corporate social responsibility initiatives in order to address these challenges.

Learning goals:

The aim of this session is to give the class an overview of the concept of CSR. After this session, your audience should have an understanding of what CSR is, should be able to critically evaluate the different approaches to CSR and reflect on their strengths and limitations in addressing the changing expectations of business firms.

References:

- Aguinis, H., & Glavas, A. (2012). What we know and don't know about corporate social responsibility. **Journal of Management**, 38(4), 932–968.
- Garriga, E., & Melé, D. (2004). *Corporate social responsibility theories: Mapping the territory*. **Journal of Business Ethics**, 53, 51–71.
- Kaplan, R. (2015). Who has been regulating whom, business or society? The mid-20th-century institutionalization of 'corporate responsibility' in the USA. **Socio-Economic Review**, 13(1), 125–155.
- McWilliams, A. & Siegel, D. S. (2001). Corporate social responsibility: A theory of the firm perspective. **Academy of Management Review**, 26, 117–127.
- Matten, D., & Moon, J. (2008). "Implicit" and "explicit" CSR: A conceptual framework for a comparative understanding of corporate social responsibility. **Academy of Management Review**, 33(2), 404–424.



Theme 6: Theoretical perspectives on CSR communication

In this session, we will discuss in particular the role of communication in the context of CSR. We will examine the emerging stream of research on “CSR communication” and learn of the different theoretical perspectives on communication, and more particular, CSR communication. This session introduces the difference between corporate communication and organizational communication and highlights the different assumptions and interests of instrumental, critical, and constitutive approaches to CSR communication.

Learning goals:

After this session, your audience should be able to distinguish a corporate communication from an organizational communication view on CSR. It should be able to distinguish different theoretical perspectives on CSR communication. Your audience should also be able to discuss the different research interests of these theoretical perspectives.

References:

- Golob, U, Podnar, K., Elving, W. J., Nielsen, A.E., Thomsen, C., & Schultz, F. (2013). CSR communication: quo vadis? **Corporate Communications: An International Journal**, 18(2), 176–192.
- Crane, A., & Glozer, S. (2016). Researching csr communication: Themes, opportunities and challenges, **Journal of Management Studies**, 104(25), 1223–1252.
- Schoeneborn, D., & Trittin, H. (2013). Transcending transmission: Towards a constitutive perspective on CSR communication, **Corporate Communications: An International Journal**, 18(3), 193–211.

Theme 7: How to write a good seminar paper/ Discussion of seminar paper topics

In this session we will discuss how to write a good seminar paper. We will examine the structure and content of a scientific paper and highlight the important aspects you need to consider when preparing your paper. This session is also useful to discuss the ideas for the topic of your seminar paper. You will be able to work with your peers on your ideas and we will discuss your research questions in class.

Theme 8: External CSR Communication: Stakeholder Dialog and Legitimacy

Gaining and maintaining organizational legitimacy is one of the main challenges that organizations in global business are facing. Legitimacy is crucial for an organization, as it improves its survival chances, grants better access to resources, and reduces the chances of opposition for the organizations constituencies. Engaging and communicating with stakeholders in a dialogic manner is proposed as a suitable way to respond to the increasing pressure on organizations. However, gaining and maintaining legitimacy in today’s networked society has become an increasingly challenging task. This session focuses on how corporations are able to gain and maintain legitimacy through



communication. It focuses in particular on the role of dialog in this process and also presents the different ways of how corporations can communicate on CSR.

Learning Goals:

After this session, your audience should be able to define the concept of legitimacy. It should be able to name and discuss the challenges and opportunities of gaining and maintaining legitimacy. You should address the role of dialog in the process for legitimization concerns and critically address the limits of a stakeholder dialog.

References:

- Castelló, I., Etter, M., & Nielsen, A.E. (2015). Strategies of legitimacy through social media: The networked strategy. **Journal of Management Studies**, 53(3), 402–423.
- Palazzo, G. & Scherer, A.G. (2006). Corporate legitimacy as deliberation: A communicative framework. **Journal of Business Ethics**, 66(1), 71–88.
- Seele, P., & Lock, I. (2014). Instrumental and/or deliberative? A typology of CSR communication tools. **Journal of Business Ethics**, 131(2), 401–414.
- Suchman, M.C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. **Academy of Management Review**, 20(3), 571–610.

Theme 9: Guest speaker

Theme 10: External CSR Communication: Corporate Reporting and Transparency

In recent years, corporations have experienced a change in their public perception. Business organizations and their representatives are increasingly confronted with societal scrutiny that transcends mere economic performance through a growing concern for social and environmental issues. One way of dealing with challenges to the corporate legitimacy and to answer to the call of increasing responsibility and transparency. Today, corporations engage in extensive (obligatory and voluntary) reporting on their sustainability and CSR engagements. This observation offers a starting point for the evaluation of how organizations aim to legitimize and account for their conduct through the use of reporting. The aim is therefore, to analyze the challenges of gaining and maintaining organizational legitimacy through corporate reporting and the demonstration of transparency.

Learning goals:

The goal of this session is to give an overview on the connection between CSR, communication, and accountability. Your audience should be familiar with the way corporations try to gain and maintain their legitimacy through reporting on their sustainability and CSR activities. Ideally, you critically address the notion of transparency.

References:

- Castelló, I., Etter, M., & Nielsen, A.E. (2015). Strategies of legitimacy through social media: The networked strategy. **Journal of Management Studies**, 53(3), 402–423.



- Capriotti, P. (2011). Communicating corporate social responsibility through the internet and social media. In Ø. Ihlen, J. Bartlett, & S. May (Eds.). **The handbook of communication and corporate social responsibility** (pp. 358–378). Oxford, UK: Wiley.
- Hahn, R., & Lülfs, R. (2014). Legitimizing negative aspects in GRI-oriented sustainability reporting: A qualitative analysis of corporate disclosure strategies. **Journal of Business Ethics**, 123(3), 401–420.
- Albu, O., & Flyverbom, M. (2016). Organizational transparency: Conceptualizations, conditions, and consequences. **Business & Society**, online first, 1–30.

Theme 11: The Role and Function of Social Media for CSR Communication

In recent years, corporations have experienced a change in their public perception. Business organizations and their representatives are confronted with increasing societal scrutiny that transcends mere economic performance, towards a growing concern for social and environmental issues. New media make it possible for all kinds of social actors to criticize publicly and openly organizational behavior. This in turn has increased the need for organizations to secure or (re-)build their (moral) legitimacy through the use of new media, particularly social media. This offers a starting point for the evaluation of how organizations use new media in their CSR communication. The aim is, to analyse the challenges of and possible reactions to the use of social media in CSR communication.

Learning goals:

The aim of this session is the introduction of social media to the context of CSR communication. After this session, your audience should be able to name challenges and opportunities of using social media in CSR communication along case examples.

References:

- Castelló, I., Etter, M., & Nielsen, A.E. (2015). Strategies of legitimacy through social media: The networked strategy. **Journal of Management Studies**, 53(3), 402–423.
- Capriotti, P. (2011). Communicating corporate social responsibility through the internet and social media. In: Ø. Ihlen, J. Bartlett, & S. May (Eds.). **The handbook of communication and corporate social responsibility** (pp. 358–378). Oxford, UK: Wiley.
- Veil, S. R., Sellnow, T., & Petrun, E. (2011). Hoaxes and the paradoxical challenges of restoring legitimacy: Dominos' response to its YouTube crisis. **Management Communication Quarterly**, 26(2), 322–345.
- Stohl, C., Etter, M., Banghart, S., Woo, D. (2015). Social media policies: Implications for contemporary notions of corporate social responsibility, **Journal of Business Ethics**, online first, 1–24.

Theme 12: The Organization of CSR communication

After focusing on the external aspects of CSR communication, we now turn towards inside of the organization. We start this part of the seminar with an evaluation of how corporations can internally organize for CSR communication. Relevant topics include the question of how corporations should implement adequate organizational structures for communicating CSR in the network society, as well as the relation between CSR implementation ('action') and CSR communication ('talk') (including the danger of "greenwashing").

Learning goals:

The aim of this session is to give an introduction of the challenges of organizing for CSR communication. After your presentation, your audience should be able to explain various forms of organizing practices in corporate communication. They should also be able to name the differences in organizing for substantive CSR implementation and CSR communication between small and large firms. Furthermore, they should be able to explain what "greenwashing" is and critically discuss the concept of "aspirational talk".

References:

- Baumann-Pauly, D., Wickert, C., Spence, L., & Scherer, A. G. (2013). Organizing corporate social responsibility in small and large firms: Size matters. **Journal of Business Ethics**, 115, 693–705.
- Cornelissen, J. (2008). *Corporate communication. A guide to theory and practice* (2nd edition, pp. 120–153), Chapter 6. London, UK: Sage.
- Christensen, L.T., Morsing, M., & Thyssen, O. (2013). CSR as aspirational talk, **Organization**, 20(3), 372–393.
- Lock, I., & Seele, P. (2016). CSR governance and departmental organization: A typology of best practices. **Corporate Governance**, 16(1), 211–230.
- Trittin, H. (2016). The 'attention entrapment' phenomenon. A narrative perspective on the cyclical dynamics of decoupling in CSR. Working paper (available on OLAT), 1-54.

Theme 13: Internal CSR Communication: Identity and Control

Although CSR communication is increasingly gaining scholarly interest, most research is focused on external CSR communication. However, increasingly, the role and importance internal stakeholder, namely employees, is recognized. Organizational commitment to CSR depends on how well employees receive CSR and how CSR links to the individual and organizational identity. This session thus focuses on how CSR relates to issues of identity – both the individual and the organizational identity. It also presents a critical engagement with CSR and CSR communication. From a critical perspective, CSR communication can be understood as a form of control on the identity of employees.



Learning goals:

After this session, your audience should be able to discuss ways how CSR relates to the individual identity and the organizational identity. Your audience should also be able to critically address the notion of aspirational control in the context of CSR.

References:

- Cheney, G., Christensen, L. T., & Dailey, S. (2014). Communicating identity and identification in and around organizations. In L. L. Putnam, & D. K. Mumby (Eds.), **The SAGE handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods**. (3 ed., pp. 695–716). Chapter 28. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Christensen, L. T., & Cheney, G. (2000). Self absorption and self-seduction in the corporate identity game. In: M. Schultz, M.J. Hatch, & M.H. Larsen (Eds.). **The expressive organization. Linking identity, reputation, and the corporate brand** (pp. 246–270). Chapter 15. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Costas, J., & Kärremann, D. (2015). Conscience as control – managing employees through CSR, **Organization**, 20(3), 394–415.
- Morsing, M., & Roestorff, A. (2015). CSR as corporate political activity: Observations on IKEA's CSR identity–image dynamics, **Journal of Business Ethics**, 128(2), 395–409.
- Iivonen, K., & Moisander, J. (2014). Rhetorical construction of narcissistic CSR orientation. **Journal of Business Ethics**, 131(3), 649–664.

Theme 14: Summary of the class

In this session, we will sum up the seminar and discuss final open questions. Also, an evaluation is conducted to enhance the quality of the seminar.