

Purdue University Fort Wayne
Department of Communication
COM 517 – Communication in Politics / Summer I 2022
May 16 - June 24, 2022
Online asynchronous

Professor: Heloisa Sturm Wilkerson, PhD Neff Hall 230C Office Hours: TR 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. & by appointment (office hours via Webex) Email: sturmh@pfw.edu; cell and text: 260-257-8845

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the interplay between candidates, news media, and citizens in the context of political campaigns. Topics include: development and application of critical standards to the rhetoric employed by candidates for public office; study of the campaign strategies employed by parties and their candidates at various levels of government – both using traditional channels and social media; political deliberation and public sphere; media coverage of political campaigns; and the polarization of political discourse.

COURSE OVERVIEW

It is my hope that this course will broaden your understanding of politics and the media as well as provide connections to your other fields of research interests. This syllabus features a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches to politics and the media written by communication and journalism scholars as well as political scientists.

Please know that it is not imperative that you have a specific type of training to take this course (rhetorical, statistical), nor is it necessary to be a media hound. What is important, though, is that you are curious about how individuals come to understand their place in democracy through mediated messages, that you appreciate how meaningful observations about politics and the media emerge from a variety of approaches and methodologies, that you are respectful of the epistemological and methodological preferences of your classmates, and that you select a topic related to politics and the media that you are passionate about and that will nourish you for the course's research project.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this class, students should be able to:

- Understand the role of communication in political campaigns;
- Be able to assess the effectiveness of political campaign communication strategies and tactics;
- Be able to critique the role of communication in the maintenance of political power.

GRADUATE PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of your time in the Department of Communication Graduate program, you should be able to:

- Develop knowledge of history, theories, and research practices in communication studies;
- Articulate, critique, and elaborate on theories, methods, approaches, and/or practices across a range of communication contexts;
- Design projects to solve communication problems by thinking analytically about communication

problems, applying communication theory, and analyzing solutions; • Demonstrate facility with advanced research skills appropriate to the discipline; and, • Develop writing practices including coherent, logical, persuasive arguments in appropriate tone and voice.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This is a graduate course and I have high expectations for you and your work. Be ready to accomplish a lot in a short amount of time: challenge yourself, and engage fully with the ideas presented in our readings and online discussions.

All essential information will be available on Brightspace, including detailed information on how to submit your assignments and participate in our discussion board.

You are encouraged to “mentally enroll” in this course as if it occurred on Monday mornings. In other words, our weeks will run from Monday to Sunday. I will post information for the upcoming week by early Monday morning, so that when you log in on Monday, you can begin the new week. It is highly recommended that you utilize the [notification settings in Brightspace](#) to stay on top of your work in the course.

Throughout the course, you should post questions related to the course any time in the Questions & Answer discussion area in Brightspace. All questions posted in the Questions & Answer discussion will be answered within 48 hours. If the nature of a question is more personal, you should email me directly.

GRADING

The core components of this course are the weekly response paper, weekly participation in the discussion board, and a research project. Grading rubrics, as well as detailed feedback and the grades earned, will be provided via Brightspace.

Grading Scale

- A = 94 to 100% A- = 90 to 93%
- B+ = 87 to 89% B = 84 to 86% B- = 80 to 83%
- C+ = 77 to 79% C = 74 to 76% C- = 70 to 73%
- D+ = 67 to 69% D = 64 to 66% D- = 60 to 63% F = < 60%

Grading Breakdown

- Research Project: 50%
 - The purpose of the research paper is to allow students the opportunity to conduct an in depth investigation of a specific area of political communication and to make a direct connection between the information gleaned throughout the course and their personal interests and goals. However, due to the short duration of this course you are not expected to develop a full-length research proposal. More details on Brightspace.
- Weekly Response Papers: 35%
 - These are activities that will help you develop stronger reading, synthesizing, and writing skills. Each week you will write one single spaced response paper to the readings. This paper should not be a summary of what you read, instead it should critically engage the work that you have read. Included in the single-spaced page should be at least one question that could help guide the discussion for the week. You do not

necessarily need to know the answer to the question, and perhaps in many cases there may not be a clear-cut answer, but you must pose them with thoughtfulness and clarity. Consider putting the authors in conversation, challenging their conclusions, challenging their methods, or agreeing with an unconventional conclusion.

- Discussion board: 15%
 - Each week contains a discussion board prompt based upon assigned readings for that unit. I will be evaluating your posts based on your critical assessment abilities, your ability to build complete arguments, your ability to put to use course concepts/ideas, your ability to extend discussion, and your ability to respond to each other. More details on Brightspace.
 - Each discussion forum assignment is allowed 1 week to develop. During that time, you are expected to check the forum daily, keeping up with, and interacting in the conversation. Concentrate on commenting, adding examples and/or specificity and asking questions. You should bring in examples from reading, demonstrating that you have read and are able to determine how they are applicable. (Hint: "I agree" does not constitute a response!) Make this, as much as possible, a conversation. You will be graded on the depth and thoughtfulness of your responses. End dates for these marks the end of the discussion (not when you should first enter the discussion).
 - With all written assignments, your clear, error free communication is expected (please edit your posts before submitting them).

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic dishonesty and plagiarism

Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on exams or quizzes; submitting another's work as your own, in whole or in part; failing to correctly cite any sources used; and falsifying documentation. All written and oral assignments must be your original work and may not be submitted concurrently with another class without specific written permission of both instructors. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and may result in failure on the assignment or in the course. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes academic dishonesty; ignorance of the policy is not a valid excuse. Please see the Collegiate Connection Student Handbook (PDF available on <https://www.pfw.edu/handbook/>) for specific college policy. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, please address these questions before the assignment is due.

Diversity Statement

Purdue Fort Wayne is committed to creating an environment that enhances learning by recognizing the inherent worth of all individuals at the university. Diversity stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. The term diversity encompasses differences of culture, background, and experience among individuals and groups. Such differences include, but are not necessarily limited to, differences of race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, and disabilities, as well as political and religious affiliation, and socioeconomic status.

<https://www.pfw.edu/admissions/areas/campus-life/diversity/>

Disabilities Statement

If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate

most needs. Contact the Director of Services for Students with Disabilities (Walb Union, Room 113, telephone number 481-6658) as soon as possible to work out the details. Once the Director has provided you with a letter attesting to your needs for modification, bring the letter to me. For more information, please visit the website for SSD at <https://www.pfw.edu/ssd/>

FERPA The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) ensures that your student records (for any students over 18 years of age) are kept confidential. I will not release your grades to anyone other than you or school officials who are given permission to view your progress. Anyone other than you (or an approved school official) may not request any information (beyond simple directory information) about you, your progress, or your status as a student in my class – this includes parents, partners, and other students.

Policies on Withdrawing from Classes

Beginning Fall 2015, the Center for Student Success & Transitions (SST), in collaboration with the Offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, instituted changes in the procedures for course withdrawal and support for students on academic probation. Detailed information about these changes may be found via the following link: <https://www.pfw.edu/offices/sst/course-withdrawal-process/>

STUDENT RESOURCES

- **The Writing Center** Helmke Library/1st floor 260-481-5740 -- peer tutors who can help with all phases of the writing process. <https://www.pfw.edu/offices/learning-support/writing-center/>
- **Career Services** KT 109 260-481-0689 <https://www.pfw.edu/offices/career-services/> -- assistance with on- and off-campus job placement and internships.
 - **Information Technology Services Help Desk** KT 206 260-481-6030 --information on all aspects of computing at IPFW; hardware and software support (including Blackboard); student email accounts. <https://www.pfw.edu/offices/information-technology-services/get-help/>
- **Personal Counseling Service/Student Assistance Program** Walb 113 260-744-4326 -- Many students feel anxious, depressed, confused or overwhelmed at times. You can get help in dealing with feelings and problems that seem out of control.
- **Studio M** Walb 220 260-481-0114 <https://www.pfw.edu/studiom/> -- curriculum-based multimedia lab for students that offers assistance customized to student needs and course requirements. You can reserve equipment and schedule consultations.
- **Center for Women and Returning Adults** Walb 120 260-481-6029 <https://www.pfw.edu/offices/cwra/> -- workshops, support groups, counseling, and other programs.
- **Diversity & Multicultural Affairs** Walb 118 260-481-6608 <https://www.pfw.edu/odma> -- skills workshops, support groups, diversity training, counseling, mentoring, cultural heritage programs; ASAP program.
- **International Student Services** Walb 145 260-481-6034 <https://www.pfw.edu/international> -- visa and related issues; study abroad questions; help with housing, counseling.

- **Helmke Library** 260-481-5759 (Communication librarian Denise Buhr) -- reference librarian help. <https://library.pfw.edu/main> access to books, journals, reference; interlibrary loan; reserve readings for courses
- **Office of the Dean of Students** Walb 111 260-481-6601 <https://www.pfw.edu/offices/dean-of-students/> -- student health insurance, mentoring, free short-term personal counseling and support.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR – Summer Session I 2022

May 16: Classes Begin

May 27: Classes Suspended at 4:30 p.m. (Memorial Day Recess)

May 31: Classes Resume

June 24: Classes End at 4:30 pm

CLASS SCHEDULE

All readings will be available on Brightspace

Week 1: May 16-22

Course Introduction

- Graber, D. A., & Smith, J. M. (2005). Political communication faces the 21st century. *Journal of Communication*, 55, 479–507.
- Kleis Nielsen, R. (2014). Political communication research: New media, new challenges, and new opportunities. *Journal of Media & Communication Research*, 30, 5-22.
- Bennett, W. L. & Iyengar, S. (2008) A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58, 707-731

Week 2: May 23-29

Political Deliberation and the Public Sphere

- Calhoun, C. J. (1992). Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere. In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. BB
- Hart, R. P. (2009). *Campaign talk: Why elections are good for us*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Chapters 5 and 8).
- Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2001). Letters to the editor as a forum for public deliberation: Modes of publicity and democratic debate. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19 (3), 303-320.
- W. Lance Bennett. (2012). The personalization of politics: Political identity, social media, and changing patterns of participation. *Annals of AAPSS*, 644.

Week 3: May 30 – June 05

Campaign Strategies and Political Advertising

- Bethany L. Albertson, (2015). Dog-Whistle politics: Multivocal communication and religious appeals. *Political Behavior*, 37, 3-26.

- West, D. M., Kern, M., Alger, D., & Goggin, J.M. (1995). Ad buys in Presidential campaigns: The strategies of electoral appeal. *Political Communication*, 12, 275-290.
- Niven, D., & Zilber, J. (2001) Do women and men in Congress cultivate different images? Evidence from Congressional web sites. *Political Communication*, 18, 395-405.
- Cho, J. (2013). Campaign tone, political affect, and communicative engagement. *Journal of Communication*, 63, 1130-1152.

Week 4: June 6-12

News Media and Politics

- Danny Hayes, “The news anew? Political coverage in a transformed media age.” Ridout, *New Directions in Media and Politics*
- Regina G. Lawrence, “Do the media give women candidates a fair shake? In Ridout, *New Directions in Media and Politics*
- Stephanie Farnsworth. (2008). “Modern Media Channels: Presidents and Presidential Candidates Spin the New Media,” from *Spinner In Chief: How Presidents Sell Their Policies and Themselves* • Kuypers, J. (2010). Framing analysis from a rhetorical perspective. In. P. D’Angelo & J. Kuypers (Eds.) *Doing framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspectives* (pp. 286-311). New York: Taylor and Francis.
- Jonathan M. Ladd, “The era of media distrust and its consequences for the perceptions of political reality.” Ridout, *New Directions in Media and Politics*

Week 5: June 13-19

Twitter, Facebook, and Political Campaigns

- McGregor, S. C. (2020). “Taking the temperature of the room” how political campaigns use social media to understand and represent public opinion. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 84(S1), 236-256. • Schill, D., & Hendricks, J. A. (2017). Discourse, disruption, and digital democracy: Political communication in the 2016 presidential campaign. In *The Presidency and Social Media* (pp. 3-36). Routledge.
- Regina G. Lawrence (2015). Campaign news in the time of Twitter. In Farrar-Myers and Vaughn, *Controlling the Message*.
- Stephanie Edgerly, Leticia Bode, Young Mie Kim and Dhavan V. Shah (2015). Campaigns go social: Are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter changing elections? Ridout, *New Directions in Media and Politics* • Matthew Eshbaugh-Soha. (2015). Traditional media, social media, and different presidential campaign messages. In Farrar-Myers and Vaughn, *Controlling the Message*.

Week 6: June 20-24

The Polarization of Political Discourse

- S. Cushion & R. Thomas. (2018). “The rise of partisan media, post-truth politics and the commercialization of news values” In Reporting elections: Rethinking the logic of campaign coverage. • Prior, M. (2013). Media and political polarization. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 16, 101-127. • Gervais, B. (2014). Following the news? Reception of uncivil partisan media and the use of incivility in political expression. *Political Communication*, 31, 564-583.
- Baum, M., & Groeling, T. (2008). New media and the polarization of American political discourse. *Political Communication*, 25, 345-365.
- Warner, B.R., & McKinney, M.S. (2013). To unite and divide: The polarizing effect of Presidential debates. *Communication Studies*, 64, 508-527.