

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management

Spring 2021

February 3 – April 14, 2021

Fundamentals of Political Management

PMGT-6401-10

3 Credits

CRN 12959

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructors

Associate Professor Dr. Michael Cornfield

Email: corn@gwu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment.

Biography:

Michael Cornfield, a political scientist, is an Associate Professor of Political Management at The George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management, and Research Director for the Global Center for Political Management.

Cornfield directs the PEORIA (Public Echoes of Rhetoric in America) Project, a research initiative developing qualitative and quantitative methods to extract political intelligence from social media data. Project reports and bulletins may be found at <https://gspm.gwu.edu/public-echoes-rhetoric-america-peoria-project>.

Cornfield received his B.A. from Pomona College and his Ph.D. from Harvard University. Before coming to The George Washington University, he taught at the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary. Cornfield also served as a Senior Research Consultant to the Pew Internet & American Life Project. He lives with his wife Kathryn Mimberg and son Matthew in Arlington, Virginia.

Follow him on Twitter [@MBCornfield](https://twitter.com/MBCornfield)

Teaching Assistant Megan Kindelan

Email: megan.kindelan@gmail.com

Office Hours: By appointment.

Biography:

Megan Kindelan is a Senior Adviser in the U.S. Census Bureau's Field Directorate. In this capacity she serves as an expert and consultant to top management, advising them on how to optimize communications with thousands of employees nationwide, media and other stakeholders about programs and data products. Kindelan has also worked for The George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management since 2012, where she teaches courses for students obtaining their master's degrees in both Strategic Public Relations and Political Management. She graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Florida's Honors Program with a bachelor's degree in public

relations and a minor in political science and then earned her master's degree in communications from The Johns Hopkins University.

Contacting Us

Email is the best way to reach us. We will usually respond within 24 hours. If we can't resolve a problem through e-mail, we will arrange a video meeting.

WHEN YOU HAVE A PROCEDURAL QUESTION, CHECK THIS SYLLABUS FIRST, THEN ASK ABOUT IT.

Blackboard

Live and videotaped sessions will be run through Blackboard Collaborate. Students can access the course site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

We will use a Google Jamboard as the course whiteboard. It can be found at:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1gtZOenR6QIc-InNCp_luTPFBRrLED11M85VpEDzY6aA/viewer?f=0

Academic Integrity

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as "cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

Support for Students with Disabilities

GW's Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Please notify your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at www.gwu.edu/~dss.

Attendance Policy

See the "Regarding Deadlines" section in the course description ahead.

Course Evaluation

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW's online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting:

Dr. Todd Belt

Director, Political Management Program, tbelt@gwu.edu, 202-994-4363

THE PROGRAM

Political Management Program Objectives

A Political Management degree prepares students to win campaigns for elective office and policy positions, and to do so in a manner that benefits democracy and society as well as their organization and clients.

In completing the degree, students will be able to:

1. Assess a political environment, develop a strategy to achieve specified goals, and execute that strategy;
2. Draw upon a repertoire of effective campaign communication skills;
3. Collect, evaluate, and incorporate empirical evidence to shape and optimize the strategy;
4. Find, engage, and motivate the right leaders, professionals, and citizens;
5. Recognize and work through recurring political dilemmas in a manner that upholds ethical standards and professional conduct.

Graduate School Expectations

Students enrolled in a graduate program should take their academic responsibilities seriously and be prepared to meet the following expectations:

1. Utilize effective time management skills so as to complete and submit their assignments on the required due dates and times.
2. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.
3. Understand how to properly format in-text citations and references for resources and information integrated into their written assignments.

GSPM prepares students for careers in the professional political world. In politics, words and deadlines matter. Excellent written communication skills are essential for success. Every word used, whether it is in a television or radio ad, direct mail piece, social media, or a press release, will be scrutinized. Similarly, deadlines are important. Election Day does not get postponed because a candidate and their campaign are not prepared. There are no "do-overs" because a direct mail piece did not arrive to its intended recipients until after the election was concluded. Students will be best positioned for success in the practical political world if they have developed and exercise excellent written communication and time management skills.

THE COURSE

“Politics and love are the only forms of constraint possible between free people. Politics is conflict become discussion, and it sets us a humane task on a human scale.”

---Bernard Crick, *In Defense of Politics*.

Many people stay away from politics. It’s usually frustrating and occasionally brutal. But some politics shunners pay more attention to it than they like to admit.

As well they should. Politics affects everyone.

A few people want to do their best to make politics, and democratic politics in particular, work. That self-selected population includes you and your classmates. So welcome!

This course, and this program, will show you how to learn more about how political campaigns are organized, how campaigns connect (and fail to connect) to citizens and governments, and how you can plan your next best steps in the political world.

More formally, Fundamentals of Political Management introduces GSPM students to the field of political management: essential concepts, skills, methods, roles, and standards of conduct that political managers rely upon to advise decision-makers and carry out their own decisions.

We will consider four “fundamentals.” A course learning objective is rooted in each one.

The Fundamentals and Course Learning Objectives

- **Strategy:** Strategic communication – communicating with a purpose in a social or organized setting--constitutes the core of applied politics. You will learn basic types of strategies inherent to election, advocacy/public education, and governance campaigns. You will also learn how to recognize from readily available evidence what kind of strategy a campaign is deploying and how well it is executing it. You will learn how to devise and implement communication strategies in many of your ensuing courses, culminating in PMGT 6495, Capstone: Political Power and Practice.
- **Research:** Political professionals collect, organize, analyze and evaluate relevant empirical evidence to shape, inform, and optimize their campaign strategy. You will learn to conduct and interpret several types of mostly qualitative research on behalf of a mock client in keeping with a designated strategy. You will be introduced to elements of quantitative research, the main subject of PMGT 6403, Political Data and Analytics.
- **Message & Narrative:** Political professionals specify who should say what to whom, when, where, and with respect to which competitors. They embed action-oriented messages into public narratives familiar to and believed by members of the community in which a campaign occurs. Professionals also master listening to and conversing with others; communication is not just a unidirectional matter of crafting and delivering messages, as important as that is. You will learn to critique and compose messages for your mock client and explain to the client in cover memos what the messages are meant to accomplish. You will learn to refine messages and combine them into a plan in PMGT 6403, Applied Political Communications.

- **Engagement:** For campaigns to succeed political managers must persuade and mobilize citizens to vote, contribute money and volunteer hours, and assemble and petition to demonstrate the strength of a policy position. At the same time, political players must meet and negotiate with counterparts in order to form alliances capable of delivering the results they seek. Engagement thus entails attracting attention, obtaining commitments, maintaining interest, and motivating both populations and peers to act in effective concert at decision moments. You will participate in and monitor group activities and cross-group simulations, and then reflect on your engagement experiences in debrief memos. In the process, you will be introduced to dilemmas and Principles of Political Leadership, the main subject of PMGT 6404.

Course Requirements

Your course grade will be based 87.5% on five memos and message deliverables, and 12.5% on an oral presentation in the last two weeks of the semester.

Guidelines on memo-writing and presentations may be found in the Electronic Reserves section of the Blackboard course pages.

Borderline grades will be decided on the basis of class attendance and participation.

For due dates see the Assignment Schedule ahead.

MEMO/MESSAGE DELIVERABLES

Students will write five memos and messages during the semester. Each of these deliverables will be worth 17.5% of the course grade. The number of days you have to complete the assignment will vary but you will have at least one week.

Generally, assignments will be introduced in class, released in full the day after class sessions, and are due at noon on the day indicated.

Please use Blackboard to access and deposit the assignments. They should be composed in Microsoft Word. Assignments submitted otherwise (e.g. email cut-and-paste, in pdf format) will not be annotated with feedback.

Here is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

Grade*	Grading Standard
A 94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.
A- 90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+ 87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.

B	83-86	Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a "B" is viewed as unacceptable.
B-	80-82	You've completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+	77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C-	70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F	Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

- Personal questionnaire due February 3. (non-graded)
- ONE – Released February 10, due February 17.
- TWO – Released February 17, due February 24.
- THREE – Released March 3, due March 10.
- FOUR – Released March 24, due March 31.
- ORAL PRESENTATIONS – Assigned March 31 for either April 7 or 14.
- FIVE – Released April 14, due April 21.

Assignment grades will be based on the intrinsic quality of your work (the content), and also on how well you write. Like your employers and clients, the GSPM places a high value on excellence in written composition. Your deliverables will be marked up with an eye toward meeting a minimum standard of correct and legible English, and you will receive credit for writing improvement over the course of the semester. From the start, however, take heed of this warning: misspelling a client or major player's name more than once in a deliverable will *automatically* lower your grade. Students with substantial writing challenges will be advised to visit the GWU Writing Center. It is quite good.

GSPM students arrive in Fundamentals with different levels of political knowledge and experience. We will perform benchmark assessments on your levels in the first two weeks of the course. This may result in variations in your written assignments. Throughout the course, you will be asked to demonstrate that you have developed more capacity for professional performance than you showed at the start of the course.

Upon request I will provide extra steps you can take to stretch your skills; you may also request or be assigned additional readings and assignment components to ensure that you are making the most of the semester. Extra credit may or may not come with fulfillment of these requests.

Standards of Conduct

As noted in the first part of this syllabus, students will be held to the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. Please read it, paying particular attention to the section on plagiarism (you will have been tested on the plagiarism policy). Should you have any questions or concerns bring them directly to me unless it has to do with my conduct toward you, in which case you should contact the Program Director. Your confidentiality will be preserved.

Politics is contentious by definition. Now and then things will be said in class that will offend your values and perhaps make you angry. You should speak up and disagree when you want to contribute to class discussion. However, personal attacks will not be tolerated in the classroom or in course deliverables (as they are, regrettably, in many real-world venues).

Late submissions and class absences will be accepted with advance permission via email request, and excused retroactively for emergencies. Grade penalties will apply at the rate of one point per 24 hours for non-emergencies and non-approved extensions. While all class sessions are important to attend, the simulation on April 15 is especially important.

Your classwork, oral and written, is regarded as private and confidential communication within the confines of the course. You are here to learn, and to do that you need to feel free to take chances, make mistakes, and hear polite and candid feedback.

THEREFORE: personal recordings of unsupervised class discussions are strictly prohibited. Wednesday night lectures and discussions will be recorded on Blackboard.

In addition, while you may draw on your classwork for real-world deliverables you may not receive any financial compensation for work done for this class.

REQUIRED READINGS

There are three books assigned for this course. They may be ordered (or downloaded) through Amazon (Kindle) and other booksellers. We do not use the GW Bookstore system. The first assignments from the books do not occur until week two of the class, so you have time to acquire them.

- Michael J. Burton, Daniel M. Shea, and William Miller, *Campaign Craft: The Strategies, Tactics, and Art of Political Campaign Management*. Praeger, either 4th (2010) or 5th (2015) edition.
- Lee Drutman, *Breaking the Doom Loop: The Case for Multiparty Democracy in America*. Oxford, 2020.
- Stephanie Vance, *The Influence Game: 50 Insider Tactics from the Washington D.C. Lobbying World That Will Get You to Yes*. Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Additional required readings can be found via the course Moodle pages (Electronic Reserves) and through links provided ahead in the syllabus.

For some assignments you will be hunting and gathering information in order to produce quality deliverables on behalf of your mock client or employer. Provide citations in your deliverables for this researched information: any footnote, endnote, hyperlink, or parenthetical system of citation is accepted so long as it is consistent and legible.

The assigned readings contain important conceptual distinctions and historical interpretations you will find immensely useful in political management. You will be expected to apply these concepts and interpretations to situations posed in class and your assignments.

THE THIRD HOUR OF THE WEEK

The new GSPM course format calls for two hours of weekly class sessions and an additional hour of structured but unsupervised meetings among students. Sometimes this third hour will involve role-played discussion; sometimes you will post answers to questions and comments on readings on the JamBoard; and sometimes there will be a deliverable-oriented joint activity.

It will be up to group members to decide how to organize this virtual hour (and it may last more or less time than an hour). We will be available to help with logistics and contents, although that may be asynchronous.

Don't hesitate to send us comments and suggestions. Those will be held in confidence unless you are asked for and grant permission to share your identity along with your ideas should we decide to adopt them.

1) February 3: CAMPAIGN LESSONS FROM THE FOUNDERS.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Appreciate the immediate and enduring significance to political management of the campaigns in the 1780s to ratify and amend the U.S. Constitution. Experience the politics of committee work.

READINGS:

- Chronology of Events – Founders.
- McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum*, Chapter Eight, "From the Many One."
- Meier, *Ratification*, excerpts from Epilogue, "'Playing the After Game'."
- Proposed Amendment Explanations.
- Gregory Watson's accomplishment.

DELIVERABLES: Non-graded personal questionnaire.

CLASS AGENDA:

- a) Discussion of McDonald and Meier readings: The Founders as politicians.
- b) Governance Simulation: Deliberating Constitutional Amendments for the 21st Century.

2) February 10: POLITICAL STRATEGY AND POLLING.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Assimilate a workday definition of campaign strategy. Understand how to collect and organize political information, both in real time and over time, for strategic use in campaign messaging and engagement, starting with surveys.

READINGS:

- Drutman, Introduction and Chapters 1-7.
- A Survey Researcher's Many Decisions.
- GW 2020 Constitution Day Poll.
- The Form of the Strategy Memo.

CLASS AGENDA:

- a) Debrief of Constitutional Amendment Deliberations.
- b) A Working Definition of Political Strategy.
- c) How to Construct and Interpret Surveys. GUEST: Dr. Todd Belt.
- d) Brainstorming Sessions on Assignment One.

Assignment One Released, due February 17 at noon.

3) February 17: POLITICS AS A BUSINESS

Assignment One Due at Noon.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Appreciate the factors behind the growth of the politics business in the last century; understand the peculiarities of the "politics market" and the connection between political consulting and innovations in communications technology.

READINGS:

- Vance, Introduction and Chapters 1-3.
- Excerpts, "Michelle Nunn for Senate 2014" campaign plan.
- Campaign Research Files.
- Group Work Rubric.

CLASS AGENDA:

- a) Templates for Strategic Political Research: the Grid, the Window, the Dossier, the Graph, and the Properly Drawn Analogy.
- b) Business Strategy and the Politics "Market."
- c) Political Consultants as Change Agents and Profit-Seekers.
- d) Scoping a Political Management Project; Project Teams Formed.

Assignment Two Released, due Feb. 24 at noon.

4) February 24: CAMPAIGNS FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE.

Assignment Two due at noon.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Work through how polls inform election campaign strategy. Deepen awareness of the resources that election campaigners must manage (message, money, people, intelligence) and the myriad of roles they must play. Hear and read about other types of research including demographic, media, and opposition research.

READINGS:

- Burton, Shea, and Miller, Chapters 1-5.
- Rick Tyler on Political Research.
- Follow the Leader.
- Podcast with two Fundraisers.

CLASS AGENDA:

- a) Challenger, Incumbent and Successor Candidate Strategies; Targeting and Triage.
- b) Campaign Fundraising. KINDELAN.
- c) Issue Defining and Positioning.
- d) Opposition Research.
- e) Leading and Following Voters.
- f) Third hour: TBA.

5) March 3: STRATEGIC MESSAGING & NARRATING, PART ONE - Text, Video, and Media Relations.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES (also for next session): Hone critical appreciation for message and narrative skills. Understand similarities and differences among five modes of influence: text (spoken and written), video, media relations (dealing with journalists and info-tainers), online communications (web page and path architecture, social media), and statistics and infographics.

READINGS:

- "Story Basics" (a collection of tweets).
- Guideline Memos "Anatomy of A Speech Module" and "Values and Beliefs."
- Burton, Miller, and Shea, Chapter 9.
- Media Tactics.

CLASS AGENDA:

- a) Principles of good messaging and narrating.
- b) Speech Modules and Argumentation.
- c) The Powers of Identification, Variable Framing and Genre Referencing.
- d) Dealing with representatives from the media; campaign vs. media agendas. KINDELAN.
- e) Construction of A Bio Spot Storyboard.

Assignment Three Released, due March 10 at noon.

6) March 10: STRATEGIC MESSAGING AND NARRATING, PART TWO: Digital and Data.

Assignment Three due at noon.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: See March 3.

READINGS:

- Presentation Design Principles.
- The Rhetoric of Numbers.
- Ray Dalio – The Two Economies.

- Auditing Web Sites.
- Basics of Digital Advocacy. (Update forthcoming!)
- Fast Food Trump.

CLASS AGENDA (continues from last week):

- a) Debrief on Bio Spot Storyboards.
- b) Infographics and the Rhetoric of Data. (Overcoming Microsoft Office.)
- c) Power to the End Users and other digital effects on strategic narrating.

--SPRING BREAK--

7) March 24: ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS & GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS OFFICES; POLITICAL MEETINGS AND ENGAGEMENT.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Deepen awareness of the resources that advocacy and public education campaigners must manage and the myriad of roles they must play (these differ somewhat from election campaigns). Compare and contrast government relations operations with interest groups and other organizational approaches to advocacy. Master the fine points of taking a political meeting: strategic, logistical, and rhetorical dimensions of recruiting individuals to join your coalition and lobbying decision-makers on policy matters

READINGS:

- Vance, Chapters 4-10.
- The Advocacy Gap.
- Face to Face with Congress.
- Grassroots Public Policy Advocacy & Lobbying.
- Baumgartner *et al.*, *Lobbying and Policy Change*, Chapter One.
- Conger, "The Necessary Art of Persuasion."
- *Groundbreakers* Chapter 4 "Building Depth by Investing in Relationships."

CLASS AGENDA:

- a) How a Government Relations Office Works.
- b) Inside, Outside, and Specialist Aspects of Advocacy Campaigns.
- c) How tilted ("rigged") is the advocacy playing field?
- d) The Art of the Political Meeting.
- e) Workshop on Prepping for Meetings.

Assignment Four Released, due March 31 at noon.

8) March 31: POLITICAL ANGER MANAGEMENT; THE POLITICS OF VIOLENCE & NONVIOLENCE.

Assignment Four due at noon.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: The value of anger, which mobilizes people for politics as no other emotion yet stymies the politics requisite for good policymaking and governance.

In the last century war has been technologically transformed several times over: nuclear weapons, (new types of) chemical-biological weapons, cyber-weapons (indirectly lethal), robotic weapons (e.g. drones). Appreciate how these technologies affect campaign strategies to achieve political goals through the threat and application of violence and nonviolent resistance.

How political professionals make presentations.

READINGS:

- Valentino *et al.*, "Election Night's Alright for Fighting: The Role of Emotion in Political Participation.
- "Negativity, Information, and Candidate Position Taking.
- Burton, Shea, and Miller, Chapters 6-8, 10.
- Guideline Memo, "Presentation Tips."
- Bueno De Mesquita and A. Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook*, Chapter 1, "The Rules of Politics."
- Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, especially Chapter 8 "Applying Political Defiance" and Appendix One, "The Methods of Non-Violent Action." <http://www.aeinstein.org/english/> (click on the icon of the pamphlet to download it as a pdf file).
- Presentation Tips.

CLASS AGENDA:

- a) Managing anger and other emotions in targeting, fundraising, attack messages, and direct contact.
- b) Official modes of communication involving hostile-dominated populations: PSYOPS, Propaganda, Govt. Public Affairs, and Public Diplomacy.
- c) Rebellious modes of communication.
- d) Theories, principles, and methods of coercion and resistance.
- e) Briefing for Simulated Summit; Oral Presentations Discussed.
- f) Prep for Simulated Summit.

9) April 7: NARRATING WHILE NEGOTIATING - A Simulated Summit.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Participate in a full-fledged simulation of a high-stakes, high-visibility decision-making summit between two sides, where players weigh compromise, consensus, and confrontation, and negotiations are susceptible in part to outside statements as well as inside maneuvers.

READINGS:

- Summit Briefing Memo.
- Simulated Summit Negotiating Template.
- Gutmann and Thompson, "The Case for Compromise," <http://harvardmagazine.com/2012/07/the-case-for-compromise>.

CLASS AGENDA:

- a) Simulated Summit. Three rounds on three different days: April 7, April 9, and April 12.

10) April 14: WHAT POLITICAL PROFESSIONALS DO.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Review the functions of political professionals in democratic republics and the world. Consider your options for a career as a political professional.

READINGS:

- Excerpts from Max Weber, "Politics as A Vocation."
- Negotating Political Agreements.
- Drutman, Chapters 8-11.

CLASS AGENDA:

- a) Simulation debrief (and oral presentations conclude).
- b) Weber's view of the political world: the tension between leaders and bureaucracies; political professionals as change agents.
- c) Perils and rewards of political involvement. Albert O. Hirschmann's options: exit, voice, and loyalty.
- d) Conclusion: your next steps at GSPM.

Sixth Assignment released, due April 21 at 11:59 pm.

Postscript:

Politics can be fun (it's Vance's last tip) so here are two recommended books that evoke the humor of being involved in politics.

- Rick Ridder, *Looking for Votes in All the Wrong Places*. Radius, 2016. Uproarious tales and exceedingly smart rules from a lifetime on the campaign trail.
- Barton Swaim, *The Speechwriter: A Brief Education in Politics*. Simon & Schuster, 2015. A witty and often scathingly funny autobiographical account of what it's like to work for a politician. Reflections on the uses and abuses of language in politics.

-END-

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