
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, DC

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PMGT 6402 APPLIED POLITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor: Josh Babb	Ford O'Connell
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Lead Instructors Bio:

Josh Babb

Josh Babb is the Director of Federal Affairs for McKesson where he specializes in federal affairs and helps design legislative and communications strategy for a wide range of healthcare issues. He meets with key federal agencies and Capitol Hill staff on healthcare issues important to McKesson and its customers.

He previously worked on Capitol Hill, serving as a Senior Legislative Assistant for Representative Renee Ellmers (R-NC), a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and with Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), the Senate Minority Whip. On Capitol Hill, he handled a wide range of issues for the Congresswoman including Healthcare, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, Labor, Immigration, Transportation/FAA, Education, and Homeland Security issues. His legislative focus was mixed with a focus on communications strategy and message development – because in a Congressional office, messaging is everything, and crises are common.

Prior to his work in Washington, he worked extensively in the healthcare field, spending time as an educator on the ever-changing healthcare industry and consulting small to medium sized business owners on how to best meet the needs of their employees concerning healthcare. While in Texas, he worked on and managed several political campaigns, including races for Governor, U.S. Congressional seats, Dallas County Judge, and the U.S. Senate. He has also worked internationally with an

investment firm in London, England, and domestically for a State Senator in Boston, Massachusetts.

Originally from Texas, Josh and his wife Alison now live in Arlington, Virginia – with their 9-year-old daughter Abby, 7-year-old son Charlie and 5-year-old son Andrew . He is a graduate of Texas A&M University, earning a B.B.A. in Management from the Mays Business School while also studying Advanced International Affairs at the graduate level from the George H. W. Bush School of Public Service. He is also a graduate of George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM), earning an MPS in Political Management.

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Ford O'Connell

Ford O'Connell is a political analyst and a Republican strategist. A seasoned campaign veteran at the local, state and national levels, Mr. O'Connell worked on the 2008 McCain-Palin presidential campaign.

He currently serves as the Chairman of CivicForumPAC and counsels clients as the Managing Director of Civic Forum Strategies.

In 2010, Campaigns & Elections magazine named Mr. O'Connell a "Rising Star" for his work with ProjectVirginia. ProjectVirginia was also awarded Campaigns & Elections magazine's inaugural Reed Award for "Best Use Of Twitter" for its work on behalf of multiple campaigns during 2009.

A frequent on-air guest on Fox News, CNN and other broadcast media, Mr. O'Connell's analysis and political commentary have appeared in a variety of publications including The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, the Associated Press, Reuters, The Washington Post, The Hill, POLITICO, E! Online, People magazine and ESPN.com.

Mr. O'Connell earned a Juris Doctor from the University of Virginia School of Law and holds graduate degrees from Duke University (MPP), Northwestern (MSJ) University and the University of Mississippi (MA). He received his undergraduate degree from

Swarthmore College in Political Science and Religion, where he was a member of the football, basketball, and lacrosse teams.

On October 28, 2013, Mr. O'Connell's first book was released, entitled – "Hail Mary: The 10-Step Playbook for Republican Recovery."

Course Description

In politics, information is the raw material and communications are the derivative. Successful campaigns and candidates are usually the ones that understand the role of the candidate, the voters, the media, the competitive environment, strategy, tactics, and budget.

This course is designed for the GSPM students to learn the difference between specialized forms of communication; the class is designed to start the students out with a foundation to build on the fundamentals. The course will focus on understanding the uses for specific tools and communication methods and then connecting the dots on how to design a communications strategy to achieve specific campaign goals.

This will be an applied knowledge class. Students will be asked to utilize what they have learned to assess current campaign strategies and rhetoric to understand, interpret and advise on-going political campaigns, policy campaigns and work within crisis situations. Students will continue to learn how to evaluate opponents' messages with a critical and strategic eye.

The course will help you better communicate internally and externally within the context of a political or issue advocacy campaign. We will look back on previous elections as well as on-going campaigns and public policy efforts as our case studies.

Course Expectations

Welcome to Class!

We want you to know first and foremost that while this class and the material contained herein can be challenging, the class as a whole and the assignments you are tasked with, are what you make of them. The more you put into each assignment, embracing the researching aspect and working to put together an assignment that not only meets the requirements but also helps you establish something you can work off of in future employment, the better off you will be.

We can personally attest to doing this as a student many years ago and using schoolwork in roles we held after finishing our degrees. This class—just like any other class—can be demanding from the get-go, especially given the short time frame in which it is taught. The timelines and immediate need for information and production mimic life on the campaign trail/communication shop, and while efficiency and production will be key in every assignment, if you stick your nose to the grindstone, you'll be fine.

Consider yourself officially challenged to produce more than just assignments, produce plans that are smart, effective, and workable. Make the work you do in this class count, so that if you get the call, in whatever your role is—you'll have the experience and substantive material to do whatever is asked of you. This class builds on itself from Day 1, so don't start slow—get going now!

Here are some basic course expectations. Look at these and note the specifics of what have been typed out there. These are here to help you, so that you don't lose easy points and that you have a good idea of what is expected of you over the next 10 weeks. As always, feel free to reach out with any questions and let us know where we can be of help!

1. **Assignments must be turned in on time.** If they are not, you will lose points. If you have an emergency, you must contact your professor before the assignment/discussion deadline. Doing so after the deadline has passed, to ask for leniency, does not guarantee it will be granted. Be proactive and stay on top of your work ahead of time.
2. **Pay attention to word limits.** Each assignment/discussion will have a word limit. This is done on purpose, to make you a more effective communicator—please do not push the limits and respect the requirements that are placed in front of you. You are not the first student in your field to work on an assignment with a tight word count—yes, it is doable and yes, you need to stay under the word count. Reference sections do not count against the word limit.
3. **Spelling, grammar and punctuation are just as important as substance.** If you turn in an assignment riddled with errors, you will lose points. So, please proofread before submitting your assignments—losing points on the basics will add up at the end of class.
4. The key doing well in this class is **specifically addressing the questions raised in each assignment/discussion.** If you are asked to address/provide seven items, we expect you to address **ALL** seven items. If you do not address all of them, expect to lose points. Remember, this course builds upon itself—many of these

same items will appear in the final project. If you fall short now, it will most likely hurt you on the final project as well.

5. **The final project in this course counts as 50% of your overall grade, so prepare early.** Please familiarize yourself with the requirements of the final project before Week 3. There are no hidden agendas and no unknown requirements—they are all there ahead of time for you to review so that you do have any surprises on the final week and as you prepare to turn in your final project. If you have questions, ask them ahead of time—don't wait until the final days of class to get clarity.
6. Except for Discussion 1.1, **we expect you to include a reference section at the end of each discussion/assignment.** We want to know what sources you used to compile your work. Failure to do so will result in a loss of points.
7. **With respect to the Discussion assignments, we ask you to respond to at least two students in your section.** Failure to do so will result in a loss of points. We want to generate good conversation so that students not only learn the material but also learn from one another.
8. **Whichever candidate you select in Assignment 1.1, that is your candidate for the rest of the course.**
9. **Wikipedia is not a graduate level resource for information. Quoting it or using it as a primary source of information will result in a loss of points.**

A small, but very important, piece of advice that can sum up the course and will ultimately determine your fate—follow the instructions. We use the instructions and requirements laid out for each assignment as a grading mechanism to know whether you hit the basics that we asked for, and then go from there to see how you built out your thought process and made it well rounded and complete. The key here for each of you, and where students can go wrong in any academic setting, is on the need to read the requirements and follow the instructions as a bare minimum for building out your work. If you fail to follow instructions or fully answer/address the question an assignment poses, you're automatically going to lose significant points, no matter how well you wrote about the points you did manage to touch on.

Slow down, be thorough, and follow directions and you'll likely do just fine in this course and any others going forward. Don't lose points because you were moving too fast—slow down and be as thorough as the parameters allow you to be.

Best of luck to each of you, and please don't hesitate to reach out throughout the course!

Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

1. Analyze and understand the construction of campaign messages and the dynamics of political communication in an election.
2. Develop effective political messages that consider issues such as strengths, weaknesses, vocabulary, and timing.
3. Adapt political communications to respond to events, while continuing to align and reinforce longer-term goals and strategies.
4. Write well-organized documents intended to effectively communicate your point of view and be more influential inside a campaign structure.
5. Formulate and execute political communications, using paid, earned, and owned media across digital and social media channels.

Required Textbook and Materials

- Maarek, P. (2011). *Campaign communication and political marketing*. (1st ed.). Chichester: Wiley Blackwell. ISBN 978-1444332353
- Young, A. (2014). *Brand media strategy: Integrated communications planning in the digital era*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-1137279569

In addition, you are expected to read the selected articles within weeks as they are listed.

Graduate School Expectations

Review the [GW University Regulations](#).

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 to complete and submit their assignments on their required due dates and times.
2. Effectively and responsibly work in groups with other students when required.
3. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.

4. 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.

Course Grading

For any graded learning activity (i.e., assignments, discussions, etc.), you will be assigned a grade based upon the following distribution. All assignments will be graded in terms of the quality of the writing, analysis, and content. With grading, there is a simple correlation: Grades reflect the quality of work. Since this course's goal is manifested in how much and how well you learn, your grade should reflect that. Here is how the grading works:

Grading Scheme

Learning Activity	Weight
Discussions	20%
Written Assignments	30%
Final Communications Plan	50%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	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–	< 94–90	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+	< 90–87	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B	< 87–83	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–	< 83–80	You’ve completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements
C+	< 80–77	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C	< 77–73	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C–	< 73–70 (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.

Incompletes

The symbol I (Incomplete) indicates that a satisfactory explanation has been given the instructor for the student's inability to complete the required course work during the semester of enrollment.

At the option of the instructor, the symbol I may be recorded if a student, for reasons beyond the student's control, is unable to complete the work of the course, and if the instructor is informed of, and approves, such reasons before the date when grades must be reported. This symbol may be used only if the student's prior performance and class attendance in the course have been satisfactory.

Any failure to complete the work of a course that is not satisfactorily explained to the instructor before the date when grades must be turned in will be graded F, Failure. If acceptable reasons are later presented to the instructor, that instructor may initiate an appropriate grade change, which in all cases will include the symbol I. The course work must be completed within the designated time period agreed upon by the instructor and student, but no more than one calendar year from the end of the semester in which the course was taken.

When work for the course is completed, the instructor will complete a grade change form and turn it in to the Office of the Registrar. The grade earned will be indicated in the form of I, followed by the grade. The indication of I cannot be removed and remains on the student's permanent academic record even after the course has been successfully completed.

If work for the course is not completed within the designated time, the grade will be automatically converted to a grade of IF, Incomplete/Failure, 0 quality points, and the grade-point average and academic standing recalculated. See the [GW Graduate Bulletin](#) for complete University regulations

Attendance Policy

Keeping attendance for an online class is not feasible; however, your full and active participation is mandatory. Weekly discussions or "chats" via digital meeting rooms are not mandatory; however, they are an opportunity for you to catch up with

classmates and ask questions of the professor regarding reading material, graded assignments, etc...Discussions are there to help you – if you fail to attend the discussions and actively participate, please do not “sound the alarm” last minute before an assignment is due or the class is complete. Take ownership of the material and use every opportunity to ask questions and be involved, so that you know what is expected of you on each assignment. It is also the student's responsibility to review lecture notes and complete the readings as assigned.

Academic Honesty Policy

The strength of the university and this program depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. Anyone breaching this policy is subject to expulsion from the master's degree program.

Accommodations

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services at 202 - 994 - 8250 or dss@gwu.edu.

A QUICK GUIDE TO WRITING

You will be required to do a lot of scholarly and legal writing in this class and in your other classes. This quick guide will give you some important, basic tools and rules for good writing.

Rules for Good Scholarly Writing

Consider WHY you are writing and HOW your reader will use your writing.

Keep your tone formal at all times.

Use precise language. You don't need to use big words or obscure words, but be sure that the words you use say exactly what you mean.

Do not use the first or second person – use only the third person.

Do not speak directly to the reader.

Do not use clichés or colloquialisms. A cliché is a pre-packaged verbal unit that cannot possibly convey precisely what you mean.

Do not state your opinion. State the facts and your analysis, not your opinion, of them.

You must support every assertion you make.

Do not use emotionally charged or loaded words. Your argument will be far more powerful if you present it dispassionately.

Do not ask rhetorical questions.

Do not begin sentences with dependent clauses.

Use the active, not the passive, voice.

Keep your sentences short and to the point.

Keep your paragraphs short.

Each paragraph should express only one thought or element.

Each paragraph should serve a purpose; it should move your argument or analysis forward.

Each paragraph should contain a topic sentence, a few supporting details, and a transition sentence.

The topic sentence in each paragraph should be an element of your argument, position, or theme. The reader should be able to read just the first sentence of every paragraph of your paper and follow the entire line of your argument or theme of your subject.

Do not use legalese unless it is necessary.

Never use a big word just for the sake of using a big word—use the best word for the purpose.

Never use extra words: “in order to” should be “to,” “for the reason that” should be “because.”

Be sure you truly understand the proper way to use moreover, furthermore, however, therefore, therefor, wherein, etc. before you use them.

Do not begin a sentence with the words “however” or “but.”

Avoid gender issues by using the plural form wherever possible, e.g. “Good attorneys communicate with their paralegals,” not “A good attorney communicates with his or her paralegal.”

[The George Washington University Writing Center](#)

GW Writing Center offers a variety of resources to assist you with all aspects of writing, including choosing a topic, conducting research, constructing a sentence or paragraph, and framing an argument.

[GW Writing Center Resources Page](#)

This will take you directly to the resources page. You will find tutorials on brainstorming, developing a thesis, outlining, revising, grammar, and other essential writing skills. You will also find the GW Code of Academic Integrity. This important document sets out GW's policies on work product, citation, copying, and plagiarism. Be sure to read this in its entirety, as you are bound by it.

Citing Responsibly: A Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism

https://www.law.gwu.edu/sites/www.law.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Citing_Responsibly_2013_14.pdf

This manual will give you direction on how and what to cite to avoid inadvertently plagiarizing materials.