

# The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## M.P.S. in Political Management

Fall 2021

Sept 27 - Dec 6, 2021

## Political Data and Analytics

PMGT 6403 Sec 10

3 Credits

Monday, 6:10 PM – 8:00 PM

Tompkins Hall, Room 302

## Instructor Information

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### Matt Price

Hi! I am the Director of Research Insights at Finn Partners, which is a full-service communication firm, in the firm's Global Intelligence division. I am a PMGT graduate, having earned my M.A. in 2007 at The George Washington University. Prior to that, I received a B.A. from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 2005 in Government and Politics. I am also, anciently, a one-time Capitol Hill intern and campaign volunteer.

Professionally, I currently serve clients across a variety of industries. Some of those industries in which I work most include PK-12 education, higher education, health and health technology, public affairs, financial services, cybersecurity, and events. My role is to conduct quantitative research (such as online or phone surveys), qualitative research (such as focus groups or in-depth interviews), and digital research (such as social listening analyses), and then turn that research into a roadmap for successful campaigns.

I began my career working as a pollster, mostly for candidate-based campaigns, for a political polling firm here in DC. I have also worked in a more traditional market research firm, primarily monitoring reputation and ad campaigns of major retailers and financial institutions. I am fortunate to have learned how research is conducted in these three different contexts – political research, market research, and a public relations research – because it is as if I have become fluent in three dialects of the same language. It is that experience that I hope to draw on and communicate as I teach this class.

### Contact Information

Phone Number: 240 988-6581

Email Address: mattprice12@gmail.com

### Communication

E-mail is the best way to reach me. I will try to respond within a few hours for shorter inquiries, and within a day for questions that require more detailed responses. I am happy to respond to text messages as well for shorter, more immediate questions. Additionally, if you have larger concerns or questions, I am happy to make myself available for scheduled phone calls.

If you are ever confused about anything in class – even if it is something you think I'll think you should already understand – please always feel free to reach out!

## Course Details

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### Course Description and Overview

We are going to focus very heavily on how political research and political data is actually used in the field. In your career – whether you end up explicitly in research or not – you will almost certainly at times be given the results of a poll, be asked to comment on focus group results, or be asked to assess what different research findings mean for your organization or candidate. Having literacy in this type of research, and the types of conclusions that can and can't be drawn, ensures your value to your organization, team, or candidate – especially since this is something that not everyone feels comfortable with.

The first part of the class will be mostly focusing on the scientific method as it applies to political research: the approach, the right questions, what statistical measures and metrics are most important and how to analyze them. The second part will focus on research design – qualitative, quantitative, and what that looks like over the course of the campaign. The final third will involve working with actual data to make conclusions, and learning how to interpret political research that you come across.

I want this class to be as practical as possible, so for the most part, assignments will be the types of products one actually produces as a professional in political research. You will need a calculator for some exercises. If you are math-phobic, which many in this field often are, note that it will be more important to be able to understand the principles than it will be to crunch numbers.

### Course Learning Objectives

As a result of completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Construct a reliable and valid research design based on the purpose of your political management questions that demonstrates the data required to answer the questions will be appropriate and accessible in a timely manner;
2. Collect appropriate primary or secondary data to answer political management questions;
3. Apply proper analytics and correctly interpret the results to answer political management questions;
4. Make actionable recommendations to political management questions based on findings from analytic results;
5. Prepare a report documenting the purpose, summary of what's already known, methods, results, and recommendations for political management questions; and
6. Critically evaluate other's research designs, data, analytics, and results to inform decisions and strategy.

### Course Requirements

- There will be five assignments, each worth between 10% and 25% of your grade. After assignments have been completed, we will usually discuss them in class.
- Assignments must be submitted on time; they will not be accepted late.
- The assignments will be on Blackboard, but for reference, they are:
  - **Homework #1:** Statistics Assignment **(10%)**
  - **Homework #2:** Baseline Poll **(20%)**
  - **Homework #3:** Focus Group Guide **(20%)**
  - **Homework #4:** Polling Strategy Memo with Crosstabs **(15%)**
  - **Homework #5:** How We Won Memo **(25%)**. This will essentially function as the final project for the class. We are going to view the entire class through the lens of a political or issue campaign. Each assignment (except HW assignment #1) will involve you imagining yourself as the chief researcher for either a candidate or an issue advocacy organization. For Homework #5, you will imagine that your candidate has won, or your issue has achieved some important goal (such as the passage of a law, or increased visibility in the media.) You will produce a memo describing how you used quantitative and qualitative research to lead your candidate to (an imaginary) victory: what your initial research questions were, how you designed research, what types of questions you asked in polls and focus groups, and how you translated those questions into victory. That is, I wanted to know XYZ, here is what I did to learn XYZ, and here are the tactics I took to achieve XYZ.
- **General Class Participation (10%)**

### Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed [#]	Due Date (By 6 PM ET)	Weight
HW #1: Statistics Assignment	3, 4, 6	10/11	10%
HW #2: Baseline Poll	1, 2, 6	10/25	20%
HW #3: Focus Group Guide	1, 2, 6	11/8	20%
HW #4: Polling Strategy Memo with Crosstabs	1, 4	11/29	15%
HW #5: How We Won Memo	1, 4, 5, 6	12/6	25%
Attendance and Participation	N/A	N/A	10%
<b>Total</b>			<b>100%</b>

Following 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.

\*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

### Required Text and Learning Materials

There is no required textbook. Most weeks will have one or two readings, either from publicly available articles or from materials I will provide. Additionally, each week I will have an hour’s worth of content, either from myself or a conversation between myself and a guest, that we will discuss in the following class.

I would *strongly recommend* purchasing a book that makes statistics as quick and painless as possible. Three basic and accessible options are:

- Wheelan, Chris. 2013. *Naked Statistics*.
- Kranzler, John. 2011. *Statistics for the Terrified*.
- CliffsNotes. *Statistics: Quick Review*.

I won’t assign readings from these, but I’d recommend one as a reference.

### **Tentative Course Calendar\***

\*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar.

#### **Week 1 – Sept 27: What Is Political Research?**

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

Reading(s) Due Today: None

*We will...*

- Go over the syllabus
- Discuss the scientific method as it applies to political management
- Learn how to form and optimize research questions, hypotheses, and theories
- Introduce the “How We Won” framework for the class

#### **Week 2 – October 4: Measurement and Key Statistics**

Assignment(s) Due Today: Send your “How We Won” candidate or issue for approval

Reading(s) Due Today: See Blackboard.

*We will...*

- Discuss basic research methodology issues including conceptualization, operationalization, measurement, definitions, indexes, and scales
- Understand ways political research is measured, validated, and may be prone to error
- Understand metrics especially important in political research such as margin of error, confidence intervals, and statistical significance

#### **Week 3 – October 11: Quantitative Research Design: Part 1**

Assignment(s) Due Today: **HW Assignment #1 (Statistics Assignment)** on Blackboard

Reading(s) Due Today: See Blackboard.

*We will...*

- Review and discuss **HW Assignment #1 (Statistics Assignment)**
- Learn the core aspects, strengths and weaknesses of quantitative research methods
- Explore sampling methods, population, sampling frame, random sampling and representative sampling
- Explain basic processes for survey data collection

#### **Week 4 – October 18: Quantitative Research Design: Part 2**

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

Reading(s) Due Today: See Blackboard.

*We will...*

- Learn how to write a poll that delivers actionable information for political teams to act on
- Learn how to analyze a poll

**Week 5 – October 25: Qualitative Research Design: Part 1**

Assignment(s) Due Today: **HW Assignment #2 (Baseline Poll)** on Blackboard

Reading(s) Due Today: See Blackboard.

*We will...*

- Participate in an actual focus group!
- Understand the way focus groups are used in political settings

**Week 6 – November 1: Qualitative Research Design: Part 2**

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

Reading(s) Due Today: See Blackboard.

*We will...*

- Review and Discuss **HW Assignment #2 (Baseline Poll)**
- Learn the core aspects, strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research methods
- Learn how to write a focus group guide that will capture actionable qualitative information

**Week 7 – November 8: Using Qualitative and Quantitative Research in a Campaign**

Assignment(s) Due Today: **HW Assignment #3 (Focus Group Guide)** on Blackboard

Reading(s) Due Today: See Blackboard.

*We will...*

- Talk about how political professionals turn qualitative and quantitative research into strategy
- Learn how to construct a comprehensive research program
- Discuss the end of semester “How We Won” Memo in greater depth

**Week 8 – November 15: Understanding Crosstabs and Advanced Statistics**

Assignment(s) Due Today: None.

Reading(s) Due Today: See Blackboard.

*We will...*

- Review and discuss **HW Assignment #3 (Focus Group Guide)**
- Understand what crosstabs are, how they are used, and how they are interpreted
- Analyze different political polling data sets

**OFF-WEEK – No Class on Monday, November 22**

**Week 9 – November 29: Interpreting Political Research**

Assignment(s) Due Today: **HW Assignment #4 (Polling Strategy Memo with Crosstabs)** on Blackboard

Reading(s) Due Today: See Blackboard.

*We will...*

- Review and discuss **HW Assignment #4 (Polling Strategy Memo with Crosstabs)**
- Look at how polls are presented in the media
- Understand ways to differentiate good polling from bad polling
- Understand how to interpret polling aggregators, looking at what some get right and some get wrong
- Understand probability and probabilistic models
- Look at how to build turnout models in political campaigns to ensure a representative sample
- Go over final How We Won questions

**Week 10 – December 6: In-Class Research Program Simulation Game**

Assignment(s) Due Today: **HW Assignment #5 (How We Won!)** on Blackboard

Reading(s) Due Today: See Blackboard.

*We will...*

- Engage in a (really fun, by all accounts) simulation of a campaign between three rival camps, using everything we have learned about how to use research in a campaign

## Expectations and Responsibilities

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### 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 their 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.

### Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructors and the students. Students can access the course site at [GWU Blackboard](#). Please note that your access to this course on Blackboard will continue for one month after the course ends. If you wish to keep any work or materials, you must download or save them before the course closes. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or [IT Blackboard web page](#).

### Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation

Over the course of the semester, students will spend approximately three hours per week in combined online class meetings (synchronous learning) and engaged in asynchronous instructional learning



activities (done weekly on one's own time) over the 10 week term. In addition to these required asynchronous and synchronous activities, reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 8¼ hours per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 30 hours in instructional time (asynchronous and synchronous) and 82.5 hours preparing for class for a total of 112.5 hours. Hybrid and Online courses meet the total 112.5 hours of total instruction.

### **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." Copying information and pasting it into a paper without a quotation and citation is an act of plagiarism. Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. For the first offense, the student will receive an "F" for the assignment and formal charges will be filed with the Office of Academic Integrity. For the second offense, charges will again be filed and the student will receive an "F" for the final course grade. Penalties for academic dishonesty are not negotiable. You will not be offered a "do-over" or resubmission. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is vital and required for this class. More than two absences may result in a failing class participation grade. If you know you are going to be unable to attend any class, please let me know as soon as possible.

### **University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays**

Students must notify faculty as early as possible, but no later than three weeks prior to the absence, of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. If the holiday falls in the first three weeks of class, the student must inform the faculty within the first week of the semester that they are enrolled in the course.

To the greatest extent possible, faculty must continue to extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.

Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday must arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities.

For the full text of the policy and calendar of religious holidays, please see the [Office of the Provost's Policies web page](#) (Religious Holidays document).

### **Online Classroom Conduct Policy**

You should behave in class as if you are in a professional setting. Please observe the following rules of netiquette for communicating online:

- Remain professional, respectful, and courteous at all times.

- Remember that a real human being wrote each post and will read what you write in response. It is easy to misinterpret discussion posts. Let's give the benefit of the doubt.
- If you have a strong opinion on a topic, it is acceptable to express it as long as it is not phrased as an attack. Please be gracious with differing opinions.
- When upset, wait a day or two prior to posting. Messages posted (or emailed) in anger are often regretted later.
- Proofread and use the spell check tool when you type a post. It makes the post easier to read and helps your readers understand what you are saying.

Your instructor reserves the right to delete any post that is deemed inappropriate for the discussion forum, blog, or wiki without prior notification to the student. This includes any post containing language that is offensive, rude, profane, racist, or hateful. Posts that are seriously off-topic or serve no purpose other than to vent frustration will also be removed.

### **Technology Requirements**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the required technology to fully participate in this course. The minimum technology requirements for learning online at GW are outlined on the [Technical Requirements and Support](#) web page. If you have any problems with the technology in this course, you can seek technological support from GW in a variety of ways, outlined on the [IT Support](#) website. GW is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment that is accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities. The following links provide more information about the accessibility of technologies that may be used in this course:

- [Blackboard accessibility](#)
- [Microsoft Office accessibility](#)
- [Adobe accessibility](#)
- [Vimeo accessibility](#)
- [YouTube accessibility](#)
- [VoiceThread accessibility](#)
- [Webex accessibility](#)
- [Zoom accessibility](#)

If you have any issues regarding the accessibility of the technology used in this course, please contact your instructor. You may also explore the [Disability Support Services](#) website (see above).

### **Technology Expectations**

Regarding technology skills, you should be able to:

- Create documents and presentation slides
- Upload files, including recordings and images
- Be open to learning and registering for new technologies
- Be flexible when technological glitches happen (which is a given)
- Seek technological help when necessary by contacting the Division of Information Technology

If you have any problems with the technology expectations in this course, please contact your instructor.

### **Use of Electronic Course Materials and Class Recordings**

Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials, including recorded class sessions, for private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials and recorded class sessions should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Please contact the

instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials and/or recorded class sessions. Please contact [Disability Support Services](#) if you need additional accommodations for accessing electronic course materials.

### **Copyright Statement**

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden. The Copyright Act (17 U.S.C. § 10) governs the rights attributed to owners of copyrighted work. Under certain circumstances, educational institutions may provide copies of copyrighted works to students. The copies may not be copied nor used for any other purpose besides private study, scholarship, or research. Users should not provide electronic copies of any materials provided on this course's Blackboard site to unauthorized users. If a user fails to comply with Fair Use restrictions, he/she may be held liable for copyright infringement. No further transmission or electronic distribution is permitted.

### **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 <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

### **Counseling and Psychological Services**

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. For additional information call 202-994-5300 or visit the [Counseling and Psychological Services website](#).

### **Title IX: Confidentiality and Responsible Employee Statement**

The George Washington University (GWU) and its faculty are committed to helping create a safe and open learning environment for all students. If you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. GWU strongly encourages all members of the community to take action, seek support and report incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Office. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty members are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Mental Health Services through Colonial Health (counselors are available 24/7 at 202-994-5300 or you can make an appointment to see a counselor in person.). For more information about reporting options and resources at GWU and the community, please visit <https://haven.gwu.edu/>.

### **The Writing Center**

The Writing Center is located in Gelman Library at 2130 H St NW in Suite 221 and they can be reached at 202-994-3765 or via email at [gwriter@gwu.edu](mailto:gwriter@gwu.edu). You can [schedule writing center appointments](#), both in-person or by phone, in advance. Daytime and evening hours are available. Check for this semester's hours at the [writing center contact page](#). The Writing Center offers summer hours.

**GWU Libraries**

Off campus students have full access to all of the research resources, services, and assistance that the Library offers. The GW community has access to 500+ online subscription databases and to millions of items, electronic and print, in the library catalog. Off-campus students even have additional privileges because the Library will FedEx print materials to your home. For more information visit the [GW Libraries homepage](#).

Call the Ask Us desk at 202-994-6048 or [contact someone at the library](#) to answer any questions. For questions beyond “Do you have this book/article?” and “How do I login?” use the website mentioned to make a research consultation appointment with a librarian. Librarians are there to guide students through any aspect of the research process, from selecting and narrowing a topic, crafting a research strategy to citation management.

**Safety and Security**

- **In an emergency:** call GWPD at 202-994-6111 or call 911
- **For situation-specific actions:** review the [Emergency Response Handbook](#)
- **In an active violence situation:** [Get Out, Hide Out or Take Out](#)
- **Stay informed:** review [notification tools for staying informed during emergency and safety related situations](#)

**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](mailto:tbelt@gwu.edu) | 202-994-4363

Suzanne Farrand  
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM  
[sfarrand@gwu.edu](mailto:sfarrand@gwu.edu) | 202-994-9309