

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management

Spring II

April 4, 2022/June 10, 2022

Digital Strategy

PMGT 6452.10

3 Credits

Wednesdays 6:10 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Instructor Information

Instructor

Cameron Brenchley

Cameron Brenchley is a communicator, strategist, and leader who specializes in helping individuals and organizations solve problems and think outside the box. He is the founder of Final Draft Strategies, helping clients with strategy, communications, customer experience, and digital marketing. His previous experience includes overseeing communications, digital, and email marketing for the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD); Deputy Assistant Secretary for Communications and Director of Digital Strategy at the U.S. Department of Education (where he created the Department's first-ever digital strategy); Senior Digital Strategist at the White House's Office of Digital Strategy; and Press Secretary in the U.S. House of Representatives. Cameron served in the U.S. Air Force for six years, four of which were spent overseas. He received a Master's in Legislative Affairs from GW's Graduate School of Political Management.

Contact Information

Phone Number: (202) 527-0458

Communication

Please connect with me via email, preferably chbrenchley@gmail.com. If it's urgent, feel free to text me. I'll do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours. I'm available for one-on-one appointments, please send me an email to schedule.

Expectations and Responsibilities

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

For face-to-face classes:

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

[Please state your class attendance policy, and please note the importance of maintaining contact with the instructor if a student is unable to attend or misses work.]

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. Unless you are having connection difficulties, you are expected to activate your camera and to be present, attentive, and engaged during online course meetings. Please do not attempt to multitask, as it is almost impossible to read something while simultaneously listening to something else. 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 (delete all not needed):

- [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 (delete all not needed):

- Create documents and presentation slides
- Use a webcam and microphone
- Use a digital camera or scanner
- 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. 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 | 202-994-4363

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

THE COURSE

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.

Course Description and Overview

"Some intern is going to get fired," is an all-too-common refrain when an ill-advised social media post hits our feed. It's a tired comment because the reality is that digital strategy is a serious business, sometimes with large teams and large budgets, and has become a critical piece to any campaign or organization's modern communications and marketing strategy. This class is an introduction to digital strategy and will teach students how to evaluate, create, implement, and manage successful digital strategies that call audiences to action and achieve organizational goals.

Course Learning Objectives

By participating in this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand how digital/social media is impacting the world around us and how communicators, politicians, and leaders must adapt to remain effective.

2. Analyze digital strategies and target audiences through the development of audience personas.
3. Create and implement digital media toolkits and campaigns that will raise awareness, spur action, and achieve strategic goals.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on four assignments, a final project, and participation in class and in the Discussion Forum.

Assignments: Throughout the term you will be building the tools and knowledge necessary to create your final project.

- **Discussion Forums:** Each week on Blackboard I will post a prompt based on the week's assigned readings. Reply to the prompt and respond to at least one (1) of your classmates. Posts and responses should be thorough and thoughtful. Just posting an "I agree" is not enough. Support statements with examples, experiences, or references. Be brief — keep each post and response to one or two short paragraphs. Responses are due before class on Wednesdays.
- **Project Proposal:** Students will choose a candidate, campaign, nonprofit, or government leader/office/department that they will use through the term for their assignments and final project. Before writing this memo, check in with professor via email to confirm the organization/person you're choosing. The proposal must include the following:
 - Name of the individual/organization you've chosen
 - Name of the campaign you'll be building your final project around, and most importantly, describe the goal of the campaign. The campaign can be an election, an issue-based campaign, piece of legislation, the release of a report, website, etc
 - Target audiences. Identify at least three different audiences for your project
 - Digital assets/channels you'll be using based on your target audiences (the individual/organization does not need to actually have these assets/channels) In addition to Facebook and Twitter, other channels to consider include, but are not limited to, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Twitch, Medium, Email, Text
 - Topline messaging you will be using for your final project campaign
- **Digital Audit:** Students will conduct a thorough audit of their individual/organization. Normally, an audit would include internal metrics and analytics, but for the purposes of this class, we will focus on public-facing information only. Students will be given a template to help guide their audit.
- **Digital/Social Media Toolkit:** Students will create a social media toolkit to be used by their individual/organization's internal and external partners and advocates. It should explain the campaign, give guidance on how to participate, and provide sample language and shareable content to promote the campaign. In addition, students will research ten (10) key influencers who they can partner with to promote the campaign. Students will create a one to two-page document with all ten influencers and a brief description on the proposed partnership.
- **Audience Personas:** Students will create at least three (3) audience personas for their individual/organization. Working from a template provided, the personas will include a summary of the audience, the audience's goals, motivations, and pain points. Students will define the "voice" they will use to communicate to each audience.

- **Final Project and Presentation:** Each student must create a digital/social media campaign project that must include:
 - A written memo and slide presentation—limited to eight (8) slides. The written memo must include:
 - Strategic goals and what you want the campaign to accomplish
 - Challenges and opposition analysis
 - Summary of targeted audiences
 - Budget
 - Roll-out tic-tok
 - Content and sample messaging for each digital channel/asset you chose in your proposal, based on targeted audience
 - The slide presentation will be a summary of your memo to be presented in class
 - Note: the final project must be an expansion of early assignments, not a repackaging of those assignments.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Project Proposal	Students will choose a candidate, campaign, nonprofit, or government leader/office/department that they will use through the term for their assignments and final project.	4/13	5%
Digital Audit	Analyze the digital strategies of your chosen individual/organization.	4/20	15%
Audience Personas	Demonstrate an understanding of target audiences through the development of audience personas.	4/27	15%
Digital/Social Media Toolkit	Develop a digital/social media toolkit to be used by your chosen individual/organization’s internal and external partners and advocates.	5/11	20%
Final Project and Presentation	Create a comprehensive digital media campaign that will raise awareness, spur action, and achieve strategic goals. Present a summary of your project to the class.	6/1-6/8	25%
Participation in class and in the Discussion Forum	Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the week’s assignments. All students are	Weekly	20%

	expected to contribute to online and in-class discussions.		
Total			100%

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

Aral, Sinan, 2021. *The Hype Machine: How Social Media Disrupts Our Elections, Our Economy, and Our Health—and How We Must Adapt.* (make sure to get the 2021 paperback edition with preface “Social Media’s Time of Reckoning”)

Romm, Joseph. 2018. *How to Go Viral and Reach Millions: Top Persuasion Secrets from Social Media Superstars, Jesus, Shakespeare, Oprah, and Even Donald Trump.*

Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials

Ronson, Jon. 2015. *So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed.*

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.

April 6, 2022

Week 1

Introduction / What is Digital? / Does It Matter?

Content Covered:

1. Introductions and class overview
2. What is digital media?
3. How has digital changed and does it still matter?

Reading:

The Hype Machine, Preface to the Paperback Edition, “Social Media’s Time of Reckoning”

Essays: “How to Fix Social Media” Oct 29, 2021 WSJ

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-to-fix-social-media-11635526928>

“On Social Media, American-Style Free Speech is Dead,” Apr 27, 2021 Wired.com

<https://www.wired.com/story/on-social-media-american-style-free-speech-is-dead/>

Assignment:

Discussion Forum (Due before end of day Sunday, Apr. 10): Is social media broken?

April 13, 2022

Week 2

Personas and Audience Development

Digital Audit

Topic and Content Covered:

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Reading Due Today:

Assignment(s) Due Today:

Project Proposal (email Professor your proposed candidate, campaign, nonprofit, or government leader/office/department for approval)

April 20, 2022

Week 3

Building a Campaign: Paid vs Organic

Intro to Digital Advertising

Topic and Content Covered:

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Reading Due Today:

Assignment(s) Due Today:

Digital Audit Due

April 27, 2022

Week 4

**Campaign Integration: The Importance of Email and Text
Intro to Toolkits**

Topic and Content Covered:

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Reading Due Today:

Assignment(s) Due Today:

Audience Personas

May 4, 2022

Week 5

Storytelling with Digital

Guest Speaker: TBD

Topic and Content Covered:

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Reading Due Today:

Assignment(s) Due Today:

May 11, 2022

Week 6

Building a Strategic Campaign

Topic and Content Covered:

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Reading Due Today:

Assignment(s) Due Today:

Digital/Social Media Toolkit

May 18, 2022

Week 7

The End of Social Media?

Topic and Content Covered:

Tik Tok brands?

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Reading Due Today:

Assignment(s) Due Today:

May 25, 2022

Week 8

Tracking Your Wins: Measurement and Analytics

Topic and Content Covered:

Google analytics, utm parameters

A/B testing

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Reading Due Today:

Assignment(s) Due Today:

June 1, 2022

Week 9

Student Presentations

Topic and Content Covered:

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Reading Due Today:

Assignment(s) Due Today:

Final Project and Presentation

June 8, 2022

Week 10

Student Presentations

Topic and Content Covered:

Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Reading Due Today:

Assignment(s) Due Today:
Final Project and Presentation