

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management

Spring 2021 Semester
February 1 – April 12, 2021

Capstone: Political Power & Practice
PMGT 6495, 3 credits

Mondays, 7:10pm – 9:10pm
Online via Zoom: [link here](#)

Instructor

Todd L. Belt, Ph.D.

Professor and Director of the Political Management Master's Program, GSPM

Dr. Belt's research and writing focus on the presidency, mass media, public opinion, campaigns and elections. He is the co-author of four books, over a dozen chapters in edited scholarly books, and over two dozen articles appearing in academic journals.

Dr. Belt received his B.A. in Economics and Political Science at the University of California, Irvine. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Southern California and studied at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan as part of his graduate work. Dr. Belt has worked as a research consultant for political campaigns, interest groups, think tanks, and media corporations. Professor Belt has held the John W. Kluge Fellowship in Digital Studies at the Library of Congress, as well as visiting positions at Wellesley College, and Kyungpook University in Daegu, South Korea. He has over 25 years of teaching experience, including at California State University Northridge, California State University Long Beach, the University of California Los Angeles, the University of Hawaii at Hilo, University of Southern California, and Whittier College. Professor Belt is a frequent contributor to media reporting on politics and is the recipient of two teaching awards.

Contact Information

Phone Number: (202) 994-4363

Email Address: tbelt@gwu.edu

Communication

I will try to respond within 24 hours to inquiries submitted by email or telephone, but inquiries submitted after business hours, on holidays, or on weekends may take longer to respond to. I am happy to schedule phone calls if that is most efficient.

Blackboard and Zoom Sites

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 communications outside class meetings. Students can access the course site at blackboard.gwu.edu. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or the [GW Help Desk](#), and here are [tutorials](#) for learning Zoom. The course will meet online via Zoom: [link here](#) or use the Zoom Meeting Room link in Blackboard.

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>

University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays

Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For the full text of the policy and calendar of religious holidays, please see link here Policy on Religious Holidays [here](#).

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/>.

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/>.

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](#)
- [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
- Use a webcam and microphone
- Upload files, including recordings and images
- 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.

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:** [Notification tools for staying informed during emergency and safety related situations](#)

Attendance Policy

Attending class is required. If you find yourself with a scheduling conflict, contact me as soon as possible to let me know that you will absent. Otherwise, it will be considered an unexcused absence and it will negatively count against your participation grade. You must attend class to participate. Three or more unexcused class absences during the spring semester will result in a failing class participation grade. In recent years, there has been a growing tendency for some students to disappear from class, only to return at the very end of (or after) the semester and expecting to be accommodated. Students who do this will not be accommodated and will not be given an opportunity to re-do missed assignments. If you disappeared on a client who expected regular meetings with you and only showed up at the time your deliverable was due, your client would be rightly upset. You would lose the client and any future referrals from the client. I understand that sometimes things happen in life, but if you fail to communicate with me about any issues you have with class attendance, you cannot expect to be accommodated.

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.

Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation

Over the course of the semester, students will spend approximately two hours per week in online class meetings (synchronous learning), plus another hour engaged in asynchronous instructional learning activities (done weekly on one's own time). 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, 8 ¼ 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.

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

As the capstone seminar represents the consolidation and application of knowledge acquired throughout your GSPM curriculum, students are encouraged to enroll during their last or penultimate term. This capstone seminar develops and integrates knowledge of political strategies, tactics, and situational considerations, and applies that knowledge to advanced political problems. Topics include: gaining and wielding power, the complexity associated with making democracy work, positioning and posturing with regard to the rules, conflict resolution, negotiation and bargaining skills, grappling with the consequences of winning and losing.

To achieve the objectives of the course, you will be asked to conceive and execute an advocacy or electoral “campaign-relevant” research report and slide presentation for a political client that you select (you may not select a client you work for as this violates GW’s nonprofit status). As you complete this project, you will draw upon concepts and skills you have learned during your coursework as well as important people to your professional network in order to produce a product of deliverables suitable for your career portfolio.

In addition to this semester-long research project, you will be asked to engage with assigned readings and produce shorter assignments designed to help you reflect on your leadership capacities and your vocation (opportunities, aspirations, and place) within the world of politics.

In sum, there are two tracks of knowledge that you will gain through this course. The first track is general knowledge about leadership and the practice of wielding political power. This knowledge will be acquired and expressed through reading groups, class discussions, and other class activities. The second track is specific knowledge, which includes applying general knowledge from this and other courses into a specific research project, client presentation and related assignments.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, the students will:

1. Understand how time and context structure (provide opportunities and impose constraints) on political strategy; learn to perceive and account for strategically those factors under one's control and gain an appreciation for heresthetics; delve into the nature of power and learn about the methods for effectively acquiring as well as wielding it; weigh the ethical and moral considerations related to manipulating public sentiments and political outcomes.
2. Be able to align strategy and tactics through time to achieve long-term goals; learn how to perceive and exploit the longer-term political opportunities which exist in the American political system.
3. Discover by doing how disciplined, systematic, and largely self-conducted research can help political clients to construct strategies and tactics to win a campaign (electoral or advocacy); develop proficiencies related to creating written and visual deliverables that communicate research results effectively to a political client.
4. Develop analytical, strategic, and professional skills with regard to your passion for specific partisan political and advocacy issues; cultivate skills for better sizing up situations, plotting strategies, aligning and executing tactics, grappling with setbacks, negotiating favorable terms, reducing (and when necessary instigating) conflict to achieve your aims, and maintaining humility.

Required Text and Learning Materials

The following course book is required in addition to readings that will be posted on Blackboard (BB). Earlier editions of this book are OK. Page numbers in assigned readings refer to current edition. Sections also provided for earlier editions.

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. 2016. *The Craft of Research*, 4th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Additional readings may be supplemented on an ongoing basis. If you have difficulty getting the readings off of Blackboard (in the Electronic Reserves section), notify me immediately and I will email them to you (don't wait until the last minute to have to deal with technical glitches).

Note that there is a problem with the web browser Google Chrome's handling of large PDF files. You can fix it by adjusting a setting this way: In Preferences, go to Settings -> Advanced (at bottom) -> In "Privacy & Security" select Site Settings -> PDF Documents -> Turn on "Download PDF Files Automatically."

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

<i>Component</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Due Date, Learning Objectives, and Evaluation</i>
Class Participation	5%	Throughout the semester you will be evaluated on the quantity and quality of your verbal remarks shared with the class. The objective is to cultivate your verbal communication and extemporaneous analytical skills.
Reading Group Preparation Assignments	20%	Throughout the semester (see course schedule for specific days) you will be tasked with preparing notes on readings prior to class. The objective is to summarize, critically analyze, integrate, and apply course readings to other material within and outside of the course (see p. 8 for details).
Discussion Board Posts	5%	Periodically through the semester (see course schedule for specific days), you will be asked to post one discussion comment and respond to two others in order to integrate the lessons of the weeks' readings.
Political Purpose	5%	This is your mission statement, which will be due Week 2. The objective is to clarify your goals for the rest of the course. Details on Blackboard.
Project Prospectus	5%	The goal is to produce a research prospectus with four components: (1) Research Question and Rationale; (2) Campaign Context; (3) Literature Review; (4) Proposed Sources and Methods. Each component will be 20% of the grade calculation, and 20% will be determined based upon grammar, spelling, and organizational clarity. Approximately 1000 words, further details on Blackboard. If you score 93 or better, you may opt out of the revised prospectus, in which case you can take this grade as your revised prospectus grade.
Revised Prospectus	15%	The goal of this assignment is to improve your prospectus based upon feedback from the class and the instructor. Details on Blackboard.
Final Report	30%	The goal of this assignment is to prepare a formal report with six components: (1) Argument and Thesis; (2) Situational Description/Context; (3) Research Results; (4) Political Analysis; (5) Campaign Recommendations; (6) Strategic Positioning and Message Development (Content & Delivery). Each one of these components will be worth 15% points, and an additional 10% will be based upon grammar, spelling, voice, and overall clarity. This report should be no more than 5000 words, excluding back matter. Details on Blackboard.
Client Slide Deck	10%	The purpose of this assignment is to summarize and make compelling the topic and findings of your research. Along five dimensions (20% each): (1) Highlighting, (2) Sequencing, (3) Visuals, (4) Persuasiveness, and (5) Grammar and Language Clarity. You should produce no more than 15 slides. Details on Blackboard.
Oral Presentation of Client Research	5%	On the last two days of class, we will have individual presentations. Students will present to other students in the audience who will pretend to be the client. The objective of this requirement is to develop skills in preparing and presenting a compelling proposal.

Grade scale (for all GSPM classes):

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Grading Standard</i>
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 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	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc. (lowest grade to pass)
F	< 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

Assignments are due at the time of the course meeting. If your assignment is not ready by the beginning of the course meeting, you will be penalized a full letter grade for each course period it is late (10 points). Failure to submit one of the major assignments (first prospectus, revised prospectus, final report, and slide deck) will result in zero points for the assignment plus a deduction of one-third of a letter grade for the overall course grade. So, it is better to turn in an assignment late than not at all. Extensions will not be given except in cases of a verified emergency.

It is the student’s own responsibility to know when, how, and what is to be submitted for each assignment. Saying you “didn’t know” is never an acceptable excuse — it is your responsibility to know. If you don’t know, find out. You have plenty of avenues for finding out the requirements for each assignment, including from other students, from assignment sheets on the Blackboard site, and from the instructor directly. It is your responsibility to plan accordingly so that your work can be accepted at the time, with the content, and in the manner prescribed. In the real world, your client does not care about your excuses, so give yourself significant lead time in order to handle problems that inevitably arise.

Don’t ever neglect an assignment or turn it in with a comment such as “I hope this is right” or “I didn’t know what to do.” This only underscores your unpreparedness to the instructor (would you ever say something like that to a client?). Failure to do so is a mark of procrastination. This responsibility is yours alone.

Note on excuses: Please realize that when you give someone (an instructor, a business associate, a boss) an excuse, you are essentially saying that you “value [something else] more than the time it took to [meet with you, complete this project, etc.]” Don’t be surprised if the person you are making excuses to does not share your perspective. Considering that, it may often be better to not offer an excuse at all.

Reading Groups

The purpose of this assignment is to develop a semester-long dialogue that interrogates the readings and benefits your general knowledge about leadership and the practice of wielding power as well as your final project. For each assigned week, your task will be one of four roles. You are to submit your prepared comments via Blackboard by 7:00pm on the day of the assigned class. If you have not submitted your assignment by that time **you will be asked to leave class until discussion is over** and your assignment will be treated as late. If you have not thought-out and written-out your comments, you are not prepared. Do not procrastinate—plan ahead to anticipate technological or other difficulties. Late submissions will be deducted one point per class meeting they are late. Include your name, group number, and assigned role for the week on your submission. Late submissions will be deducted 10 points per class meeting they are late. Include your name, group number, and assigned role for the week on your submission. See Blackboard for your Group number and assignment by week.

1. Discussion Director

You are the leader of your group, and it is your responsibility to begin the discussion, to keep it moving, and maintain a focus on the readings for the entire duration of the discussion (if I hear you say “we’re done,” then you have failed to do this). It is your job to elicit (make the other people in the group discuss) a brief summary of the assigned reading. Be prepared with a list of at least **five (5) questions** (at least one per reading) to guide discussion in such a way as to get the most out of your conversation (don’t just ask: “What did you think about X?”). Do not do the job of the other members of the group (see below). You are responsible for ensuring a polite and respectful conversation, and to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak and that no student dominates the conversation or is left out. Make sure everyone has a chance to share their prepared comments.

2. Methodologist

Your job is also to help your group as a political analyst. Identify at least **five (5) choices** (at least one per reading) the author(s) made in order to convince the audience of the validity of the piece’s thesis. The choices you identify can deal with data and evidence (most important), examples, and logical arguments. Cite the page and line numbers of the examples you’ve chosen so that others can find it and offer a brief explanation as to why you think the writer made the methodological choices s/he did. Then, evaluate the strength of this choice — is it persuasive? Your submission should invite agreement and/or disagreement among group members in order to create a critical evaluation of the piece.

3. Connector

Your job is to ensure that this continues to be a semester-long conversation that builds on prior knowledge. You must refer specifically to previous readings (more than just one), and to specific passages in those readings, as they pertain to the current week’s readings. Identify at least **five (5) connections** (at least one per reading) between the current reading and previous readings (use more than just one), and cite them by author, page number, and line number. You don’t have to copy down the whole passage that “connects,” just the key words. You must construct a **question** to stimulate discussion regarding each connection (something more sophisticated than “what do you think of this?”).

4. Applier

You must integrate the course material by reference to real-world situations. You must develop a list of at least **five (5) applications** (at least one per reading) where the material from the reading applies to a political issue, current (preferably) or past. You must explain why and how it applies. Be sure to reference where you found the applied external material (not the week’s reading) with a **full citation and/or web link**. Your applications should be phrased in a way that stimulates discussion or even disagreement among your group.

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: 2/1. Course Introduction and Background

Readings: None.

Asynchronous Work: None.

Assignment Due: None.

Objectives Covered: 4.

Weekly Topics:

- Discussion of Course Expectations.
- Discussion of Political Purpose Assignment
- Discussion of Logic and Fallacies

Week 2: 2/8. Research I

Readings: Booth et al., pp. 1-84 (Sections I-II.5).

Asynchronous Work: Watch Video and do Discussion Board Posts.

Assignment Due: Political Purpose and Background Information Sheet, due by 7:00pm.

Objectives Covered: 2, 3, 4.

Weekly Topics:

- Understanding Scientific Research.
- Mastering the Building Blocks of Scientific Research.
- Discussion of Political Purposes.

Week 3: No class 2/15 (Presidents' Day)

Week 4: 2/22. Research II

Readings: Booth et al., pp. 85-172 (Sections II.6-III).

Asynchronous Work: Watch Video and do Discussion Board Posts.

Assignment Due: Project Prospectus, due by 7:00pm.

Objectives Covered: 2, 3, 4.

Weekly Topics:

- Causality.
- Making Claims.
- Dismissing alternative explanations.
- Warrants.
- Discussion of Prospectuses.
- Trial run of Discussion Group Preparation and Execution.

Week 5: 3/1. Classical Understandings of Leadership and Alternative Models

Readings: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Introduction & Chapters XIV-XXV, Krippendorf, *Outthink the Competition*, pp. 3-83.

Asynchronous Work: Watch Video and prepare Reading Group Assignment.

Assignments Due: Reading Group Assignment #1, due by 7:00pm, Revised Prospectus, due by 7:00pm.

Objectives Covered: 1, 2, 3, 4.

Weekly Topics:

- Leadership and Political Realism.
- The Paradoxes of Leadership.
- Power Games.

- Thinking Deep into the Game.
- Brief Presentations of Prospectuses

Week 6: 3/8. Wielding Power and Dealing with Rivals

Readings: Riker, *Art of Political Manipulation*, Preface, Chapters 2, 12, and Conclusion (BB),
Caro, "Master of the Senate," pp. 383-419 (BB).

Asynchronous Work: Watch Video and prepare Reading Group Assignment.

Assignment Due: Reading Group Assignment #2, due by 7:00pm.

Objectives Covered: 1, 2, 3, 4.

Weekly Topics:

- Sources of Power.
- Means of Wielding Power.
- Competition and Power.
- Creating a need and filling it.

Spring Break 3/15-19

Week 7: 3/22. Losing and Transitions

Readings: Shepsle, "Losers in Politics (And How They Sometimes Become Winners)" (BB),
Kumar, *Before the Oath*, pp. 8-67 (BB).

Asynchronous Work: Watch Video and prepare Reading Group Assignment.

Assignment Due: Reading Group Assignment #3, due by 7:00pm.

Objectives Covered: 1, 2, 3, 4.

- What Failure Teaches about Politics.
- What Failure Teaches about Leadership.
- Transitions into and out of governance.

Week 8: 3/29. Negotiations

Readings: Fisher and Ury, *Getting to Yes*, pp. 3-57 (BB),
Freund, *Smart Negotiating*, pp. 13-97 (BB),
Tinsley et al., "Women at the Bargaining Table" (BB).

Asynchronous Work: Watch Video and prepare Reading Group Assignment.

Assignment Due: Reading Group Assignment #4, due by 7:00pm.

Objectives Covered: 1, 2, 3, 4.

- The Negotiating Environment.
- Preparing Alternatives.
- Preparing for the Unexpected.

Week 9: 4/5. Individual Research Presentations.

Assignment Due: Client Slide Deck, due by 12:00 Noon.

Objectives Covered: 1, 2, 3, 4.

Week 10: 4/12. Individual Research Presentations.

Assignment Due: Final Report, due by 7:00pm.

Objectives Covered: 1, 2, 3, 4.

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.