

# The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## Instructor

Meagan O'Neill, PhD  
She/her/hers

## Contact Information

Phone Number: (716) 698-8193  
Email Address: megoneill@gwu.edu

## Communication

Email is the best way to communicate with me. I respond within 12 hours M-F but tend to respond slower on the weekends. I am happy to communicate via WebEx, as wanted to enhance office hours or questions, particularly during COVID schedule. I am happy to advise on statistics, but also happy to mentor students.

## 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 <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or [helpdesk.gwu.edu](mailto:helpdesk.gwu.edu).

The course will meet online at 7:10 on its scheduled meeting days via WebEx.

## Required Text and Learning Materials

Access to Blackboard, all required readings will be posted in weekly folders and reading should be completed prior to the class of the week they are posted.

## Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials

Wheelan, Chris. 2013. *Naked Statistics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

*R for Data Science*: <https://r4ds.had.co.nz/index.html>

*Statistical Inference via Data Science: A Modern Dive into R and the tidyverse*:  
<https://moderndive.com/index.html>

## 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

## M.P.S. in Political Management

Spring 2021

February 1/April 15

## Course Name

6403 Political Data & Analytics  
3 Credits

## Synchronous:

Thursdays, 7:10 pm – 9:10 pm

Asynchronous: 1 hour per week, will be posted on Fridays but should be completed before next class

Office Hours: Thursdays 6:00 pm – 7:10 pm  
Tuesdays 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

## Virtual:

<https://gwu.webex.com/meet/megoneill>

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.
- Faculty should 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 should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

### **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/>.

### **Attendance Policy**

**Attending class is required.** Should you find yourself with a scheduling conflict, please contact me as soon as you are aware of the issue to let me know you will absent; otherwise, it will be considered an

unexcused absence and will negatively count against your participation grade. We will make up the coursework in an additional meeting to ensure you are on the same page. There will be one unexplained absence allowed per student per semester without penalty.

### **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 any/all of the following:

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

## **THE COURSE**

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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.

### Course Description and Overview

To assure success in today's political environment, political managers must also have data competence. This includes the ability to design their own complex projects, constructing comprehensive strategic plans, targeting information and data analysis to specific audiences, gathering information, using data to inform decision making processes, and prediction of needs and outcomes. Data-driven decisions, evidence, and knowledge guide efficacious results.

### Course Learning Objectives

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

1. Design reliable and valid research based on political management questions that demonstrate understanding of the data required to answer the questions accessibly and timely
2. Choose and complete proper analytics to primary or secondary data to answer political management questions
3. Make recommendations to different audiences using analytic results
4. Prepare a professional report and presentation explaining the purpose, literature review, methods, results, and recommendations of a research project involving political science
5. Critically evaluate other's research designs, data collection, analytics, results, and recommendations to inform decisions and strategies
6. Objectively analyze claims by media, politicians, and organizations while identifying bias in their analytical thinking

### Course Requirements

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|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Problem Sets               | 25% |
| 2. In-class Participation     | 20% |
| 3. Group Model Presentation   | 20% |
| 4. Final Project Paper        | 20% |
| 5. Final Project Presentation | 15% |

**Evaluation and Grading**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Learning Objective(s) Addressed</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Problem Sets	1, 2, 6  Students will complete problem sets assigned during class prior to the next class meeting. Students are allowed to collaborate with colleagues on the analytic and coding portions, but interpretation and recommendation must be individually completed.	Every other class (see schedule)	25%
In-Class Participation	1, 3, 5, 6  Students are expected to come to class prepared for the conversation and tasks. Students should take part in dialogues, exercises, and other in-class assignments.	Every class	20%
Group Model Presentation	1, 2, 4  Students will work with a group to create a simple predictive model based on secondary data. Groups will be chosen by the professor based on interests. To create a model, students must use at least three predictor variables and one criterion variable. Students may use any of the methods we discussed in class. No written portion will be due, but students are required to present their model as if to a political action committee, political campaign, or other political organization.	March 11	20%
Final Project Paper	1, 2, 3, 4	April 8	20%

	Students will create a research project using empirical evidence to explore a political management research question that informs a political decision or policy. Students should summarize 10 empirical resources to discover the theoretical relation between the variables of interest, use a secondary source or create their own survey (which will be distributed with my approval to the students in the course) to gather primary data, analyze the variable using a method we discussed in class utilizing R, interpret the results and make actionable recommendations to an organization, and offer suggestions to improve the shortcomings (identified by student) of the design.		
Final Project Presentation	3, 5  Students will present the findings of their final project to the class, including organization of the information in a digestible and well-thought-out presentation.	April 8	15%
Total			100%

**Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:**

<b>Grade*</b>	<b>Grading Standard</b>
A 94-100	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	Completion of the assignment, but without 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). Specifically, for large projects you will lose 10% for each day the assignment is late. For problem sets, you will lose 10% for each business day the assignment is late.

**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. Readings will be posted in the Weekly folders and it is up to the students to complete the readings *prior* to the class.

Date	Topic	Assignments Due
2/4	Introduction to Political Data and Analytics  Lying with Statistics Central Tendency & Variability	None
2/11	Research Design Literature Review  Probability and Conditional Probability	Problem Set 1
2/18	Testing Hypotheses Categorical Data and Nonparametric Methods	Problem Set 2
2/25	Linear Statistical Models Causal Inference	Problem Set 3
3/4	Estimation	
3/11	Random Variables and Distribution Expectation Other Distributions Large Random Samples	
3/18	Multivariate Analysis	Problem Set 4
3/25	Experimental Methods	Problem Set 5

4/1	Polls	Problem Set 6
4/8	Text Analysis	
4/15	Workshop Based Analysis Exploration	

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**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.*