

Syllabus

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management

Fall 2019; Aug. 26-Dec. 9

Influencing the Media - 3 Credits

PMGT6464 - Section 94359

Mondays 7:10 - 9:40 p.m.; 1776 G St. NW, Room C115

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



Instructor: Robert (Rob) Engle is president of Engle & Co. The company provides creative communication strategies for a number of leading private and public firms and organizations involved in public policy/affairs, real estate, construction, development, high tech, consumer goods, and finance.

Prior to forming Engle & Co., Engle served as a press secretary and legislative aide to Senator Paula Hawkins (FL), Congressman Dan Mica (FL), and Congressman Don Ritter (PA). He also served as director of public relations for a large Washington advertising and marketing agency and as head of public relations for a local American Cancer Society chapter.

He holds a master's degree from Harvard University and is an alumnus of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government; he completed his undergraduate studies in journalism/public relations at the University of Florida

Contact Information

Email Address: *(coming - waiting for personnel)*

Communication - Email me anytime and I will respond within 24 hours, usually much sooner.

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.

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.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. 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/>.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class

If we experience some an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave here, we will meet at **[fill in proximate location]** in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

Attendance Policy

Because communication practitioners understand the importance of timeliness, ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED ON TIME. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED AND NO EXTENSIONS.

** For medical emergencies and situations, I need to be made aware prior to not after deadlines.*

Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation

Over the course of the semester, students will spend at least 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 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 | 202-994-4363

Dr. Jack Prostko, Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development

College of Professional Studies

jackp@gwu.edu | 202-994-3592

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

Through analyzing media coverage of public officials, political campaigns, legislative battles, interest groups, and issues of public policy, students will formulate strategies in an effort to win favorable news coverage for the issue or candidate and for ending a media crisis.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Create communication strategies that utilize practical applications to effectively influence the media.

2. Employ written and verbal communication skills necessary to devise and implement a public relations campaign on behalf of a candidate, client or cause.
3. Master the key elements of effective and successful written, verbal, and digital/visual political communication.

Course Requirements

Students are required to attend class, participate in regular class discussions and work on in-class group exercises. Students will be expected to do weekly readings, writing assignments and take a final exam. Assignments are due by the next class and will be returned the following week. Students must bring a hard copy to class as well as upload on Blackboard.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s)	Due Date	Weight
Written and Verbal Assignments	See class schedule	See class schedule	50%
Class Participation	Analysis, contributions, ideas, readings	Ongoing	25%
Final Exam	Testing Skills/Knowledge learned	See class schedule	25%
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.

Required Text and Learning Materials

- Peggy Noonan - *On Speaking Well*
- Frank Luntz - *Words That Work*
- William Zinsser - *On Writing*
- AP Stylebook - all assignments should follow AP guidelines.
- Selected articles posted in modules on Blackboard

Description of Ongoing Class Assignment

You will select an issue or politician for whom you serve as communications director. You will assume this role throughout the course, using the same issue or person as the basis for your arguments. You are to conduct a media audit, develop communication goals and devise a communications strategy outlining how you will accomplish said goals. You will develop their message and include the tactics you will use to release it. You will include the full political landscape in which you are working (your opposition, counter-argument) and whom you are trying to influence, (your audience(s) and how you will reach them). We will grade this based on writing and analysis. Each students will need to pick a different candidate/ issue.

Tentative Course Calendar*:

Week 1- Aug. 26 - Welcome and Introductions

A discussion about the upcoming semester and what students will learn from the course. There will be an overview of assignments, readings, in-class exercises, the schedule, final exam and class project.

- Case study
- **Assignment To Be Completed by 9/9** - You are the newly hired communications director for a candidate, cause, or organization. It's a 3- month stint from September 9 to December 12. For whom do you work and why? Write a 1-page job description including whom you work for, what your responsibilities are and what the expectations are for your role. ****Please note**-- this choice will carry through to other assignments throughout the semester.**
- **Readings:**
 - Washington Post news articles:*
 - “John McCain reports for duty in his own heroically touching HBO tribute”
 - Scott Peterson, “It was my job, and I didn’t find him”
 - “The working-class struggles that propelled Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to victory”

Week 2 - Sept. 9 - Getting There: Constructing the Narrative

Class will examine politicians, organizations, and issues to determine what their “narrative” is. We will discuss the importance of ‘the story behind’ and the difference between a bio and a narrative.

- **What is the story you want to tell?**
 - Narrative answers the question of “who” a person is; how they developed their personal or cultural identity; for issue campaigns, the narrative answers the question “why,” why is the cause necessary, what was the genesis and what is the fight about?
 - Tell your story – what are the pitfalls to avoid? Are there holes and if so, how do you fill them? Narratives are stories, not resumes or biographies.
- **Assignment to be Completed by 9/16** - Write a narrative for a candidate or cause. Your story should make us care, make us relate and want to read more.

- **Reading:** Luntz, Chapters 1-3

Week 3 - Sept. 16 - Part I: Developing an Effective Message

What makes a message effective, and how we go about developing one? During this class, we will explore:

- Elements of a good message
 - How surveys, focus groups and other tools can be used to determine what is a good message
- **Assignment to be Completed by 9/23 :** Write 3 top line messages for your candidate, cause, or organization. Each message should include 2-3 supporting points that include credible evidence and/or data. Remember—These will be the messages that will be used as a basis for all communication for your effort.

- **Readings:**

- Luntz Ch. 5 “Be the Message”
- Noonan “Some Basics to Note”

Week 4 - Sept. 23 - Developing an Effective Message Part II: Message Delivery

- You now have a message but can you stay on it? What happens if your delivery falls flat—or worse—takes a wrong turn? We will discuss and practice the skill of message delivery.
- How is a message delivered in an interview? Language, actions, non-verbal communication
- A few of the interview tactics and pointers we will cover:
 - Reporter controls the question - you control the answer
 - What to do when a curveball question comes your way; pivot or punch back
 - Do you ever abandon your message on the spot? How to “bridge” back
 - How to use appropriate word choice for a given situation; catastrophes, bump in the road

- Have you captivated your audience? If not, what tactics can you use?
- Silence - when to use

- **Assignment to be Completed by Sept. 30:**

Listen: FT podcast, “How persuasion works in business, life and politics”
<https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/ft-alpha-chat/id448302257?mt=2&i=1000383368011>

- **Reading:** Noonan - “Give me One a Them Soundbite Things”

Week 5 - Sept. 30 - Developing an Effective Message Part III: Persuasion

- **Message:** is not fact and it’s not a list of things you want to accomplish. Message is a rhetorical device that conveys ideas, values and point of view in a way your audience can relate. Your message will be subject to argument. You will have to use various appeals to communicate your message. The most effective messages are persuasive and can operate on different rhetorical levels, particularly in response to an argument.
- **Rhetoric:** logical, emotional, moral
- **Faulty Reasoning:** circular, faulty cause and effect, either/or thinking, over generalizations, faulty emotional appeals
- **Assignment to be Completed by 10/7 -** Find a news talk show segment on YouTube relating to your issue/politician— look for the rhetoric and faulty reasoning. Cite examples of each in the segment. Write a response that uses solid reasoning to make a persuasive argument. Find a segment applicable to the person, issue or organization you represent.

Week 6 - Oct. 7 - Setting Communication Goals and Developing a Plan

The first and second steps of strategic planning are articulating the goal and defining the issue. In today’s class, we will:

- **Goal setting:** What do we want to accomplish?
- **Discuss the elements of a good strategic plan**
- **Explore:** What is a media audit? Why do we need one?
- **Case Study:** How to analyze a client, set goals, and develop an effective strategy

Assignment/Readings to be Completed by 10/14:

- Read Luntz Chapter 6
- Zinsser Chapters 1-5

Week 7 - Oct. 14 - What is News?

We examine the building blocks of news stories. Why is something news? Who cares about it? What's the point? Understanding what "the media" looks for when reporting news is essential to developing an eye and an ear for it.

- Do you have a target audience?
 - Will they care about what you have to say? How will you make them care?
 - News stories can be noteworthy because of their WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY or HOW or some combination. Your story will draw interest because of these subjects.
- **Discussion:** We will look at several stories and discuss what about them makes them NEWS
 - **Assignment to be Completed by 10/28** - You are the editor. Find an article/TV clip (applicable to the person, issue or organization you represent) in print or online that is unusual ...why did this make news? How did people respond? Include the news story and write a paragraph explaining why this piece made it in print or online.
 - **Reading:** AP article "I never said that! High-tech deception of 'deepfake' videos"

Week 8 - Oct. 28 - Fake News!!

- **Discussion:** What is fake news? Is it a new phenomenon?
 - Historical perspective: From Yellow Journalism to the Birther Movement
 - Review Case Study
 - The role Fake News plays in traditional and social media: how does it affect perceptions?
 - Media bias vs. Fake News
- **Assignment to be Completed by 11/4:** Invent a scenario in which your cause politician is a victim of a fake news story and describe how the story evolved and what you would do to combat the story

- **Reading:** TIME article “An Unprecedented Scandal”

Week 9 - Nov. 4 - Getting Noticed and Making News: The Tools

The next three classes will focus on ways to communicate the news you wish to make. We will examine how to write a press release, pitch a story and use photographs to tell a story on digital mediums.

- **The Basic Written Tools and Organization**

Elements and format:

- Headlines and Sub-heads
 - Lead paragraphs
 - Quotes
 - Writing the Sound Bite
 - Pertinent Facts
 - Writing for impact
 - When to do an event vs. releasing paper
 - Talking Points
- **Assignment to be Completed by 11/11** - Write a press release announcing news your candidate, organization or cause is seeking to make. Write a media advisory for an event your candidate, organization or cause is planning to advance the news announced in said release. What is the headline you want to see? What are the elements of the story the press will be interested in and how can you accommodate them? Keep the visuals in mind.

Week 10 - Nov. 11 - The Basics of Pitching and the Media’s Perspective

Talking to Journalists: Pitches and Guidelines

- Recap: Election 2018
 - The Basics: how to pitch, how not to pitch
 - How to write an elevator pitch
 - In Class Exercise: Practicing a Pitch (subject matter to be provided)
 - What is the media’s perspective?
- **Assignment to be Completed by 11/18** - Develop two different pitches you intend to send via email to a print reporter and a TV reporter. Identify the reporter and outlet. Write the attention grabbing line and the

pitch text, and include the media advisory and press release from your previous assignment.

- **Reading:** Noonan “Soundbites and Soundbites II”

Week 11 - Nov. 18 - Visual and Social Communication

- **Social media and the internet - Current and Future Trends for News Dissemination**

Today's class will review:

- How to effectively use and write for social media to influence others
 - Social media as a medium to break news
 - The power of visuals
 - Preview of next week's class: An overview of the relationship between reporters and communications professionals
- **Assignments to be Completed by 11/25:**
 - 1) Create a Tweet, Facebook, and an Instagram post and/or story (one for each platform, including photos). The photos and language should be engaging and move your message.
 - 2) Create a short 20-second verbal pitch for a reporter and be ready to share in the next class.

Week 12 - Nov. 25 Understanding the Other Side of the Desk: Reporters

- **A review of the relationship between reporter and communications professional.**
- **Assignment to be Completed by 12/2 -** Put your journalist hat on and write a story that fits into your communications narrative, keeping in mind what the reporter has seen and heard (press release, pitches, etc). Identify which outlet you write for and who the audience is.

Readings:

- WSJ article “At Southwest Airlines, the Minutes after Disaster Struck”
- Business Insider article “This timeline shows exactly how the Thai cave rescue unfolded”

- AP article “DC’s public schools go from success story to cautionary tale”

Week 13 - Dec. 2 - What is a Crisis? And Reactive Damage Control

Danger! Damage Control—What to do when the unexpected happens. Crisis/Emergencies/Scandals -- Guidelines

- Getting the information you need to respond quickly, accurately
 - “Be quick, don’t hurry.”
 - Thinking fast: killing the story, damage control, rebuttals
 - Digging out of a Hole: A good example; a poor example
- **In-class Assignment:** What are some recent political/corporate crises and how would you handle differently? We will analyze and discuss recent examples. Class will break up into teams. Each team will be given a set of facts and a scenario and must develop a communications strategy “on the fly.”

Week 14 - Dec. 9 - Final Exam

Exam is two parts:

Written exam: You will be given a scenario outlining a person or organization with facts and news to be made. You must write a press release, one social media tag/lead/message, and determine your target audience. Be prepared to write where you are sending this release, where you are posting and WHY. You will have 45 minutes to write, print and email release to me.

Verbal exam: Working with the same scenario, you will develop and deliver a pitch for a to-be-determined news outlet, one general news and one specialized publication.

*(*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.)*

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.