

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management

May 21 – July 23 | Summer 2019

Applied Political Communications

PMGT 6402, Section 10

3 Credits

1776 G Street, C-112

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

FIONA CONROY

MEGAN WHITTEMORE

Contact Information

FIONA CONROY

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Bios

FIONA CONROY

Fiona Conroy is a partner at Deliver Strategies, one of the nation's leading Democratic strategic communications and direct mail firms. Her clients include Planned Parenthood, PA Governor Tom Wolf, the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC), EMILY's List and numerous congressional and state legislative candidates across the country.

In addition to her communications and direct mail work, Fiona has extensive campaign management experience. In 2018, she managed the successful independent expenditure that helped Pennsylvania Democrats pick up 11 State House seats and 5 State Senate seats. In 2015, she managed the independent expenditure that helped Democrats sweep all three open Pennsylvania Supreme Court seats (with major consequences for both congressional and legislative redistricting). She previously served as campaign manager to both U.S. Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) and former North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue.

Fiona earned an MA in Political Management and a BA in History, both from The George Washington University. She and her husband Rob live in Washington, DC.

Bios (continued)**MEGAN WHITTEMORE**

Megan Whittemore is a seasoned political advisor with more than a decade of experience working on Capitol Hill and running political campaigns. Megan is currently Chief of Staff for U.S. Senator David Perdue and previously served as Deputy Chief of Staff and Communications Director. Megan helped lead Senator Perdue to a decisive victory in Georgia and retake the Senate Republican majority in 2014. Prior to the Senate, Megan served as Press Secretary for the House Majority Leader managing strategic initiatives and major media events for the House Republican Leadership team.

In 2018, Megan was elected by her peers to serve as President of the Senate Press Secretaries Association (SPSA), one of the most active and bipartisan professional organizations on Capitol Hill. In 2013, Megan was featured on the "PR People To Watch, Rising PR Stars 30 and Under" list by PR News.

Megan brings extensive broadcast media experience having started her career covering national politics for Fox News Channel. Megan is originally from New Jersey and a graduate of The George Washington University School of Media & Public Affairs and Graduate School of Political Management.

Communication

Please address all electronic communications to BOTH Fiona Conroy and Megan Whittemore at the email addresses provided above. We prefer to be contacted by e-mail, unless it is an emergency, in which case you may call us at the cell phone numbers provided above. We will respond within 24 hours to all student e-mails. If you would like to arrange an appointment to discuss your work or progress, we will plan to be available each week for an hour prior to class. If necessary, we can arrange alternative availability.

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 <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

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/>.

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 GSPM (805 21st Street, NW, Suite 401) 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

Attending class is required. Should you find yourself with a scheduling conflict, please contact us as soon as possible to let us know that you will absent. Otherwise, it will be considered an unexcused absence and it will negatively count against your attendance and participation grade. Your attendance and participation grade is not based on attendance alone. We expect you to be fully engaged in class discussions and to take part in and complete the in-class exercises.

Late Assignment Policy

Assignments are due before class starts at 7:10 p.m. on Tuesday. Assignments received after 7:10 p.m. will be considered one day late. Assignments received after 7:10 p.m. will be immediately reduced by one full letter grade (A to a B, e.g.). For each additional day an assignment is late, it will be reduced by one letter grade. Any assignment that is turned in more than three calendar days after it is due will be worth zero (0) points.

Extra Credit Policy

There will be no extra credit offered in this course.

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. Lara Brown

Director, The Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM)

lambrown@email.gwu.edu | 202-994-4545

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

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THE COURSE

Political Management Program Objectives

1. Assess a political environment, develop an appropriate strategy to achieve specified goals, and execute that strategy.
2. Draw upon a repertoire of effective communication skills and techniques for use in a political environment.
3. Collect, evaluate and incorporate relevant empirical evidence to shape, optimize, and continuously inform the development of a communications strategy.
4. Find, engage, and motivate the essential government officials, lawmakers, professionals/influencers, and voters/citizens to implement your strategy and achieve your goal(s).
5. Recognize and work through recurring political dilemmas in a manner that upholds ethical standards in the profession and exhibits principled leadership.

Course Description and Overview

In politics, whether you are working to elect a candidate or pass legislation, learning how to communicate with, target, persuade, and influence voters, constituents, lawmakers, or any other group, are key ingredients to winning.

Successful political and issue advocacy campaigns reach the right people with the right messages. The people managing those campaigns develop messaging, create the means on how to communicate those messages, and choose the right person to deliver those messages. The campaigns know which groups they need to persuade, they find them, influence them, and hopefully mobilize them to take action.

This course is designed for GSPM students to explore the differences between specialized forms of communication. The class is designed to help students build a foundation based on the fundamentals of political communication; learn specific tools and aspects of communications; and then connect the dots on how to conceive of, design, and implement a communications strategy to achieve specific campaign goals.

This is an applied knowledge class. Students will be asked to use what they have learned to assess current campaign strategies and rhetoric to understand, interpret, and advise on-going political campaigns, issue advocacy campaigns, and work within crisis situations. Students will learn how to evaluate and dissect opponents' messages with a critical and strategic eye.

We will review previous elections, analyze advocacy campaigns, and study the current election to inform our thinking and provide a base of knowledge to draw on in the future.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Analyze and understand the construction of campaign messages and the dynamics of political communication in an election.
2. Develop effective political messages.
3. Adapt political communications to respond to events, while continuing to align and reinforce longer term goals and strategies.
4. Clean, clear, mistake-free writing to get your point across whether it's inside a campaign or public messaging.
5. Formulate and execute political communications and strategies using paid, earned, and owned media across traditional and digital media channels.

Course Requirements

Every week, students must show up prepared to discuss the news. We will begin class by discussing the previous week's political and policy news. You will be asked to share something you read that week that you feel was either interesting, perplexing, or beneficial to your understanding of political campaigns and campaign rhetoric, tactics, and the use of images. You will be asked to evaluate events and discuss their impact on electoral politics and policy issues.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Assignment 1: EFFECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE	This assignment will test your knowledge of what makes for good grammar, compelling sentence structure and organization, and powerful arguments.	WEEK 2 (5/28)	15
Assignment 2: STORYTELLING EXERCISE	How to tell the same narrative to different audiences using different tools and techniques.	WEEK 4 (6/11)	15
Assignment 3: CANDIDATE BRIEFING MEMO	How to assess the media environment, advise a candidate, and predict what questions reporters will ask.	WEEK 7 (7/2)	15
NEWS QUIZZES	Occasional pop quizzes to assess whether you are reading news about politics.	Ongoing	10
FINAL PROJECT: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN	Design a communications plan for a political or issue campaign, and adapt that strategy.	WEEK 9 (7/16)	25
FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATION	Presentation of final project.	WEEK 10 (7/23)	10
CLASS ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION	It is important to be in class and engaged with class. Much of what will be learned will be taught in class and will not be available in the readings alone.	Ongoing	10
TOTAL			=100

We will be grading in whole or half-points (for example, you could earn a 15 or a 14.5). There will be five news quizzes. Each will be worth two points. Again, no extra credit points will be offered.

Assignments submitted late will be reduced by one full letter grade per day, for up to three days (assignments that are submitted after class has started on the day it is due = minus one letter grade; assignments submitted the day after it was due = minus two letter grades; assignment submitted two days after it was due = minus three letter grades; assignment submitted three days after it was due = zero (0) points). Please refer to the Late Assignment Policy on page 3.

Your Attendance/Participation grade is not based on attendance alone. Please refer to the Attendance Policy on page 3.

The grade scale for all GSPM classes is below:

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 to Purchase

Brand Media Strategy, Integrated Communications Planning in the Digital Era by Antony Young

The Speechwriter: A Brief Education in Politics by Barton Swaim

Act of Congress: How America's Essential Institution Works, and How It Doesn't by Robert Kaiser

PLEASE NOTE: Additional Required Texts Will Be Posted on Blackboard

Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials

Recommended readings (not required): Words that Work by Frank Luntz; Made to Stick by Chip Heath and Dan Heath; POP! by Sam Horn; On Speaking Well by Peggy Noonan.

Recommended writing resources (these are not required reading): The Elements of Style (4th edition); The Associated Press Stylebook; American Heritage Dictionary.

CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

WEEK 1, May 21:

INTRODUCTION: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MESSAGING STRATEGY

What is applied political communications? Where and how does your communications and campaign strategy intersect? In this class we will discuss the elements of communications planning, and how these determine who you need to reach, influence, and target.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- Introduction
- Overview of the course, books, and outside readings
- In-class expectations and assignments
 - We want to be clear: We will be grading in whole points and half-points. For example, if an assignment is worth 15 points, you could earn 13.5 or 14.
 - There will be no extra credit.
 - Late assignments will be docked one letter grade per day late. Any assignment submitted after the start of class (7:10PM) will be considered one day late.
 - You must write well. We expect work where the writing is coherent, logical, and without grammatical errors and typos.
 - We expect you to read the news. You should read at least one of the following: *The Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Politico*, and anything else that interests you.
 - Since this is a class about communicating with the media and policymakers, we want you to be where the action is and we expect that you will follow political reporters, pundits, and others on Twitter. But there's no requirement that you Tweet.
- How should you think about communications and writing?
- What is the messaging environment and how does it impact your plans?
- What are communication tools and channels?
- What is good writing?

Reading Due Today: Act of Congress, Preface plus Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

WEEK 2, May 28:

THINKING ABOUT THE BRAND: CORNFLAKES vs. CANDIDATES

How branding works with consumers, and voters alike.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Who is your candidate/organization? Who is your audience?

- Demographics and geographies
- Apply your candidates to the race and issues to the environment, identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Formulating a winning narrative: What's your rationale for running and for winning?
- What is your budget?

What is your candidate or organization's brand?

- Corporate vs. Political Branding
- Building, maintaining and defending your brand
- The Party Brand vs. the Candidate Brand
- Social media, branding and social awareness
- Brands change with user experience & the death of a brand
- Hispanic and Ethnic Targeting and the Brand

Reading Due Today: The Responsive Chord (pp. 80-107, posted on Blackboard)
Brand Media Strategy (pp. 1-48)

Assignment Due Today: Assignment #1

WEEK 3, June 4:

ELEMENTS OF YOUR COMMUNICATION PLAN, BUILDING YOUR COMMUNICATION MODEL AND ROLLING OUT YOUR CAMPAIGN

In this class, we will review the building blocks of a communications plan. We will also talk about how to start a campaign and introduce a message frame.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- What's a message?
- What's a message grid?
- Communicating well is no substitute for poor policy
- What are, who are, and can you cultivate and leverage "super friends"/"validators"?
- How to maximize message carry-forward throughout a campaign
- Developing an editorial calendar
- What's at the heart of a communications plan?
- Do's and Don'ts of communications rollout
- Announcing a campaign (how and when to enter a race)
- Communications efforts during inspection time (pre- and post-announcement)

Reading Due Today: *The Speechwriter*, Chapters 1-9

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

WEEK 4, June 11:

MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND CONTENT DELIVERY

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- What is the communications ecosystem?
 - How are we consuming media and what does the media landscape look like today?
 - Where are we getting our news?
 - What makes for powerful content?
 - Using your content for maximum impact
 - To whom and where to pitch stories?
 - When to give a reporter an exclusive?
 - Syncing the content with the distribution channels

Reading Due Today: *The Speechwriter* (finish the book); *Act of Congress*, Chapters 8, 9, and 10

Assignment(s) Due Today: Assignment #2

WEEK 5, June 18:

THE PRESS & COMMUNICATIONS

Every aspect of the news industry is under enormous strain. News organizations continue to face severe financial pressure (although, given the rise of Donald Trump, some have experienced a temporary wave of good fortune). Publishers demand more of editors. Editors demand more of reporters. Reporters are asked to write more stories, faster than ever, better than everyone else, across print, digital, video, and social media channels. So reporters inevitably expect and demand more of communications directors working on campaigns, for advocacy organizations, and in the government. We will discuss strategies for working with the press and getting the most favorable coverage possible in this fast-paced demanding environment and give you the tools to protect those you are working for and yourselves.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- What's happening in journalism?
- How do journalists see the world?
- Is anything off-the-record?
- Pitching stories
- Communicating with the press
- Media Training and preparing materials
- Press calendar/crafting plans and executing press events/media tours
- Message discipline & rapid response
- The art of the leak / handing out exclusives

Reading Due Today: Act of Congress, Chapters to be assigned

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

WEEK 6, June 25:

YOU'RE IN THE CONTENT BUSINESS

Paid, Earned and Owned Communications

Whether a political campaign or an organization running an issue based campaigns, you are now in the content business. It's up to you to produce original and compelling content and to "push it out" via traditional and digital distribution channels.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- The power of image and words
- Emotion, storytelling and other ways to get your content to stick
- Content production
- Content placement and media channels

Reading Due Today: Made to Stick (pp. 3-24; pp. 25-62, posted on Blackboard)
Words That Work (pp. 149-178, posted on Blackboard)

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

WEEK 7, July 2:

PAID MEDIA AND APPLYING TACTIC TO A STRATEGY

We will study how you can determine which media connects best with your coalition of voters, and how this fits within your budget.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- Tactics vs. strategy
- Understanding media lingo and currency
- Planned and buying media
 - TV
 - Direct Mail
 - Digital/Social
 - Radio
 - Other
- Building your media campaign

Reading Due Today: Brand Media Strategy (pp. 109-208)

Assignment(s) Due Today: Assignment #3

WEEK 8, July 9:

CAMPAIGN TIMING AND TACTICS/NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNING

We will study how to most effectively use timing in your campaign, from launch to conclusion. We will also explore negative campaigning – how, when and why to go negative, and what to do when you're attacked.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- Defining campaign goals and game plan
- How to create the maximum amount of carry-forward to your initial campaign message
- How and when to enter the race, campaign announcement and candidate rollout
- Communications efforts during inspection time (pre- and post-announcement)
- Introducing and driving a negative message
- Negative attacks and why voters secretly love them
- Negative attacks dos and don'ts
- What to do when your campaign is attacked
- The press and negative attacks
- Tools for going negative

Reading Due Today: Dirty Politics (pp. 15-63, posted on Blackboard)

The Political Brain (pp. 317-347, posted on Blackboard)

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

WEEK 9, July 16:

CLOSING OUT A CAMPAIGN

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- The pivotal moments in a campaign that make a difference
- Momentum and enthusiasm
- The endless loop of talking points
- The role of humor, scorn, and sarcasm in a campaign
- Preparing for the shocking moments, which can dramatically transform the race
- Can you ever be prepared?
- Making your closing argument
- Political campaigns end; some advocacy campaigns do not

Reading Due Today: Act of Congress, Chapter 22 + Epilogue

Assignment(s) Due Today: Written Final Project

WEEK 10, July 23:

FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

Oral presentation from the student's final project (3-minute limit, PowerPoint, 5 slides only).

Reading Due Today: None

Assignment(s) Due Today: Oral Presentation of Final Project

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.