

# The Graduate School of Political Management

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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## **M.P.S. in Political Management**

Semester Spring 2020

Class start/end date: 01/16-5/4

## **Course Name: Targeting and Voter Contact**

Course Number: PMGT 6440.80/ SMPA 6270.80

Credits: 3

Class Day/Time Monday 7:10-9:40 p.m.

1957 E Street Room 313

Washington D.C. 20052

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## **BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

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### **Instructor**

Jim Green

### **Contact Information**

Phone Number: (202) 495-1125

Email Address: [greenjd@gwmail.gwu.edu](mailto:greenjd@gwmail.gwu.edu)

### **Communication**

Email is the best way to communicate with me, and you can expect a response within 24 hours. If you need to call, please do so before 8 p.m. I will be available before and after class to answer any questions.

### **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 [www.helpdesk.gwu.edu](http://www.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 <http://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 must leave here, we will meet in front of the Marvin Center's entrance on H Street 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**

I expect you to be in every class and on time. I will take attendance at the start of every class. If you do have a legitimate excuse, please let me know as soon as possible. If you have more than three (3) unexcused absences during the semester, you will receive a failing grade in class participation (or 15% of total course grade.)

### **Late Policy**

I expect every assignment to be turned in on time; for every day an assignment is late, your grade for the assignment will drop by one letter.

### **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 the following:

Todd Belt  
Director, Political Management Program  
[tbelt@email.gwu.edu](mailto:tbelt@email.gwu.edu) | 202-994-4363

Dr. Jack Prostko  
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development  
College of Professional Studies  
[jackp@gwu.edu](mailto:jackp@gwu.edu) | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand  
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM  
[sfarrand@gwu.edu](mailto:sfarrand@gwu.edu) | 202-994-9309

## **THE COURSE**

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### **Course Description and Overview**

Is big data the panacea for today's electoral challenges? Students will learn how to use big data to target voters in electoral and issue advocacy campaigns, learning how to shape communications to a target universe. This course will focus on three areas: email list building, persuasion and turnout. For each of these topics, students will learn how to pull lists from the voter file, manage them in Excel and identify the best mediums to reach a target universe.

### Course Learning Objectives

1. Understand the main strategies and tactics of campaigns, paying close attention to how targeting and analytics can further those actions.
2. Understand how polling dictates messaging, persuasion and outreach.
3. Understand how voter contact impacts on-the-ground campaign decision-making.
4. Appreciate the uniqueness of a presidential campaign and understand the impact of the Electoral College on campaign decisions.

### Course Requirements

Grades will be based on the following:

- **In-class assignments: 25%**  
During various classes (announced in advance), students will complete partnered computer assignments utilizing the voter file. One student will be in Excel while his/her partner will be using Word to documents their work and findings.
- **Three short reaction memos: 25%**  
Each student will write three (3) reaction memos based on select weekly readings. These memos should be between (1500-2000) words in length and will be due at the beginning of class. Students should provide a detailed critical analysis and personal perspective on the compelling arguments found within the weekly readings.
- **Final presentation: 35%**  
As a final presentation, students will have to develop and present a campaign plan showing an allocation of resources. In other words, students will need to show where and how the campaign's money is being spent based on their base and persuasion universes.  
  
This final presentation will consist of two (2) parts: a (1500) word written memo outlining the proposed plan of action (worth 20%), and a PowerPoint presentation (worth 15%) that each student will use to defend his/her thoughts/perspectives in front of their peers and some of our guest speakers. Final memos will be due on Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, and presentations will take place on Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup>. These presentations should be no more than 15 minutes in length and after you present, I will open the floor to discussion and questions.
- **Classroom participation: 15%**  
I expect students to attend class and come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Additionally, it will be important that students stay up to speed on current political issues and trends, especially as they relate to 2020 presidential campaigns.

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 the requirements.
C+ 77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C 73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C- 70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

\*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

### Required Text and Learning Materials

There will be one textbook required for this class, and the remainder of assigned readings will come from current and relevant articles, clippings and broadcast segments.

Hersh, Eitan D. 2015. *Hacking the Electorate: How Campaigns Perceive Voters*

### 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.

### **Monday, January 13**

#### *Week 1*

- Topic and Content Covered: Intro to micro-targeting and the voter file
- Readings Due Today:
  - Hacking the Electorate – Introduction (pages 1-23)
  - Sides, John. 2015. “*The real story about data*” (available on Blackboard)
- Guest Speaker: Paul Westcott, Vice President, [L2](#)

### **Monday, January 20**

#### *Week 2*

- **NO CLASS DUE TO MLK HOLIDAY**

### **Monday, January 27**

#### *Week 3*

- Topic and Content Covered: Why don't campaigns listen to their pollsters?
- Reading Due Today:
  - Hacking the Electorate – Chapters 2-4 (pages 24-87)
- Guest Speaker: Stefan Hankins, President, [Lincoln Park Strategies](#)
- In-class Assignment: Analyze polling data

### **Monday, February 3**

#### *Week 4*

- Topic and Content Covered: Is direct mail still effective?
- Reading Due Today:
  - Hacking the Electorate – Chapter 5 (pages 88-122)
- Guest Speaker: Joe Lestingi, Partner, [Chadderdon Lestingi Creative Strategies](#)
- In-class Assignment: Create a persuasion direct mail universe

### **Monday, February 10**

#### *Week 5*

- Topic and Content Covered: TV – A campaign's biggest expenditure
- Assignment Due Today:
  - First Reaction Paper – Will Mr. Trump win reelection even though his approval numbers are under water or will Democrats prevail?
- Reading Due Today:
  - Hacking the Electorate – Chapter 6 (pages 123-140)
- Guest Speaker: Raghu Devaguptapu, Partner [Left Hook Comms](#)
- In-class Assignment: Create a persuasion TV universe for both broadcast and cable

### **Monday, February 17**

#### *Week 6*

- **NO CLASS DUE TO PRESIDENT'S DAY HOLIDAY**

### **Monday, February 24**

#### *Week 7*

- Topic and Content Covered: Can digital move poll numbers?
- Reading Due Today:
  - TBD
- Guest Speaker: Jackie Huelbig, Account Lead, Candidates & Causes, [Centro](#)
- In-class Assignment: Create a digital advertising plan in Excel hitting your base and persuasion universes.

### **Monday, March 2**

#### *Week 8*

- Topic and Content Covered: Analyzing and manipulating data
- Assignment Due Today:
  - Second Reaction Paper – Will Democrats take control of the Senate in 2020 or will the GOP be able to hold? What state will swing the balance?
- Reading Due Today:
  - Hacking the Electorate – Chapter 7 (pages 141-167)
- Guest Speaker: Dan Scarvalone, Associate Director of Research and Data, [Bully Pulpit Interactive](#)
- In-class Assignment: TBD

### **Monday, March 9**

#### *Week 10*

- Topic and Content Covered: Modeling the voter file
- Reading Due Today:
  - TBD
- Guest Speaker: Tim Teehan, Vice President of Public Affairs, [Infogroup](#)
- In-class Assignment: TBD

### **Monday, March 16**

#### *Week 9*

- **NO CLASS DUE TO GWU SPRING BREAK**

### **Monday, March 23**

#### *Week 11*

- Topic and Content Covered: GOTV in the era of social media
- Reading Due Today:
  - Aldrich, John. 2014. *“Getting out the vote in the social media era: Are digital tools changing the extent, nature and impact of party contacting in elections”* (available on Blackboard)
- Guest Speaker: Braden Wright, Principal, Concierge Consulting LLC
- In-class Assignment: Devise a plan on which social media sites to spend advertising dollars

### **Monday, March 30**

#### *Week 12*

- Topic and Content Covered: Who is winning the Big Data arms war, Democrats or Republicans?
- Reading Due Today:
  - Hacking the Electorate – Chapter 8 (pages 168-195)
- Guest Speaker: Chris Casey, Freelance Digital Strategist, [Casey.com](http://Casey.com)
- In-class Assignment: TBD

### **Monday, April 6**

#### *Week 13*

- Topic and Content Covered: Politics and Corporate America: Who is following whom?
- Assignment(s) Due Today:
  - Third Reaction Paper – How much money will be spent on the 2020 Presidential election and how much of that will be spent on TV? Digital? Direct Mail?
- Guest Speaker: Jeff Cosgrove, Director at [Conversant](http://Conversant)
- In-class Assignment: TBD

### **Monday, April 13**

#### *Week 14*

- Topic and Content Covered: Why email is still king?
- Reading Due Today:
  - Hacking the Electorate – Conclusion (pages 196-219)
- Guest Speaker: Stephen Solomon CEO, [Break Something](http://Break Something)
- In-class Assignment: Draft a fundraising email to your base and persuasion universes

### **Monday, April 20**

#### *Week 15*

- Topic and Content Covered: The economic and psychological impact of big data
- Reading Due Today:
  - Nickerson, David. 2014. “*Political Campaigns and Big Data*” (available on Blackboard)
- Guest Speaker: Peter Casey, Director of Analytics, [Catalist](http://Catalist)
- In-class Assignment: TBD

### **Monday, April 27 and Wednesday, April 29**

#### *Week 16*

- **FINAL PRESENTATIONS** – written memos due on Monday, April 27; presentations will be spread over Monday and Wednesday’s (April 29) classes.

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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.*