

# The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## M.P.S. in Political Management

Spring 2020

January 21 – April 28, 2020

## Crisis Management in American Politics

PMGT 6458.10

3 Credits

Tuesdays 7:10 – 9:40pm

Monroe Hall, Room 251

### **BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

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#### **Instructor**

Michael D. Edwards

#### **Contact Information & Communication**

Professor Edwards will gladly make himself available for consultations with students during the week. In addition, students should feel free to call him with questions or concerns. He can be contacted by text or telephone at 202-770-7302 or via email at [Edwardsm@gwu.edu](mailto:Edwardsm@gwu.edu) or [NEAMDE@aol.com](mailto:NEAMDE@aol.com).

#### **Blackboard Site**

An online Blackboard site has been set up for this course. It is each student's responsibility to check the site regularly. Inasmuch as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructor and the students, it is highly recommended that students log in to the course site on a daily basis. Students can access the site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or [helpdesk.gwu.edu](http://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>.

## **Attendance Policy**

Preparation for, attendance at, and participation in all classes are essential elements in this course. Students are expected to be present at each class. Should a student not be able to attend a session, he/she should notify Professor Edwards in advance and make appropriate arrangements to familiarize himself/herself with the material covered, to submit any assignments due at that time, and to receive any additional assignments that might be forthcoming from that session.

## **University Policy on Observances 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.

## **Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation**

Over the course the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for 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 at least 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class.

## **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 [www.disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/](http://www.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 conduct 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 in our classroom until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave this site, we will meet at **Gelman Library** 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/>.

### **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](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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#### **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 an appropriate strategy to achieve specified goals, and execute that strategy;
2. Draw upon a repertoire of effective communication skills;
3. Collect, evaluate and incorporate relevant empirical evidence to shape, optimize, and continuously inform 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.

## **Crisis Management in American Politics**

### **Course Description and Overview**

This course examines the management of crisis situations, turning points, and defining moments in contemporary electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs. It is designed to help students develop the tools and techniques necessary to predict, identify, isolate, avert, manage and even capitalize on such situations. The course will be conducted as a seminar emphasizing in-depth class participation and discussion. Through examination of case studies and the use of simulation exercises, it explores both the theoretical and practical aspects of crisis management in today’s world.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

1. Understand, recognize and assess crisis situations in electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs.
2. Master tools and techniques for the effective management of crisis situations.
3. Discern the reputational and electoral consequences of scandal, and develop the appropriate strategy to minimize negative effects.
4. Understand and deploy ethical standards, judgment and behavior in addressing crises and scandals.

### **Course Requirements**

Students will be required to complete a comprehensive research, analysis, and writing assignment; one group research, analysis and presentation project; and one short assignment related to crisis identification and a second short assignment on ethical issues in a specific crisis situation. Details about the three assignments will be distributed at the second class of the semester. The components of the final class grades will be as follows: individual research and analysis project (30%); group presentation

project (20%); general preparation for and participation in class discussions (30%); crisis identification assignment (10%), ethics assignment (10%).

### Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Crisis Identification Memo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand, recognize and assess crisis situations in electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs.</li> </ul>	Feb 5	10%
Ethics Memorandum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and employ ethical standards, judgment and behavior in addressing crises</li> </ul>	Feb 226	10%
Group Crisis Case Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand, recognize and assess crisis situations in electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs.</li> <li>Master tools and techniques for the effective management of crisis situations.</li> <li>Develop and employ ethical standards, judgment and behavior in addressing crises.</li> </ul>	March 26 April 2	20%
Individual Research & Analysis Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand, recognize and assess crisis situations in electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs.</li> <li>Master tools and techniques for the effective management of crisis situations.</li> <li>Develop and employ ethical standards, judgment and behavior in addressing crises</li> </ul>	April 23	30%

Attendance and Participation			30%
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.

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

#### Required Text and Learning Materials

- Steven Fink, Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable, iUniverse, 2000
- Laurence Barton, Crisis Leadership Now - A Real World Guide to Preparing for Threats, Disaster, Sabotage and Scandal, McGraw-Hill, 2008
- Harvard Business Essentials: Crisis Management, Harvard Business School Press, 2004

Additional readings will be available on reserve at the George Washington University Library or distributed by the instructor.

All reading assignments should be completed at a reasonable pace throughout the term with the caveat that students should be prepared to discuss each assignment at the class at which it is scheduled for discussion.

Students should also be familiar with recent American political history and are encouraged to review books and related materials regarding U.S. Presidential campaigns in the post-World War II era.

### **Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials**

- Harvard Business Review on Crisis Management, Harvard Business School Press, 2000
- Steven Fink, Crisis Communications, McGraw-Hill, 2013
- Ian Mitroff, Christine Pearson, L. Katharine Harrington, The Essential Guide to Managing Corporate Crises, Oxford University Press, 1996
- Ian Mitroff, Managing Crises Before They Happen, AMACOM, 2001
- Ian Mitroff and Thierry Pauchant, We're So Big and Powerful Nothing Bad Can Happen To Us, Birch Lane Books, New York, 1990
- Larry Sabato, Feeding Frenzy: How Attack Journalism Has Transformed American Politics, Lanahan Publishing, 2000
- Alan Schroeder, Presidential Debates: Forty Years of High-Risk TV, Columbia University Press, New York, 2000

### **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.

### **Spring 2020 Class Schedule**

#### **Tentative Course Calendar\***

\*Professor Edwards 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: January 21**

##### **Overview -- Crisis Management in American Politics**

Introduction to crisis management in the electoral, legislative, and issue management arenas. Overview of the material to be covered. Discussion of the required readings, assignments, and course projects.

#### **Week 2: January 28**

##### **Anatomy of a Crisis**

Overview of the theoretical and practical aspects of crises and crisis management in the political world. Exploration of the differences between crises and turning points in the political realm and those in corporate, international, and public policy settings. Discussion of the dynamics of crisis management including the nature and stages of crises, participant behavior in crisis situations, and the impact of the crisis environment on decision-making in campaigns and in legislative advocacy. Examination of the potential opportunities and benefits presented by crises.

*Crisis Identification Memo assigned.*

### **Week 3: February 4**

#### **Scandal**

An examination of scandals in American politics and their impact on governing institutions, parties, elections, and those participants embroiled in scandal. Understanding the role of the media in scandals, discern the types of scandals, and gauging the varying severity of their likely effects. Exploration of potential strategies to minimize, exploit, or manage a scandal. Consideration of the ethical dimensions associated with political scandals.

#### ***Read (on Blackboard):***

- John B. Thompson, "What is a Scandal" in *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*, Polity Publishing, 2000, pp: 11-30.
- Lara M. Brown, "It's Good to Be An Incumbent: Scandals, Corruption, and the 2006 Midterm Election," in *Extension of Remarks*, vol. 30, no. 1 (January 2007).
- Alison Dagnes and Janet Smith, "The Politics, Geography, and Constituencies of Political Sex Scandals," in *Sex Scandals in American Politics*, edited by Alison Dagnes, Continuum Publishing, 2011, pp: 62-93.

*Group Project Teams formed.*

### **Week 4: February 11**

#### **Decision-Making in a Crisis Environment (1)**

Exploration of the organizational dynamics and decision-making processes in the legislative/political environment. Practical and theoretical approaches to participant behavior in crisis situations. Examination of organizational dysfunction during crises.

*Crisis Identification Memorandum due.  
Ethics Memorandum assigned*

### **Week 5: February 18**

#### **Decision-Making in a Crisis Environment (2)**

Discussion of internal operations and structure, stakeholder relationships, internal information flow, and response capabilities. Exploration of adversarial responses to crisis situations and actions. Approaches to risk assessment and crisis planning.

*Individual Research & Analysis paper topic due.*

### **Week 6: February 25**

#### **The Ethics of Crisis Management**



An exploration of the ethical issues raised in confronting crises. Developing a framework for ethical decision-making and behavior in crisis situations. Approaches to addressing dilemmas in crisis management in ways that uphold ethical standards. In-depth discussion of the multiple crisis situations presented in the film, *Wag the Dog*.

***Prior to Class:***

Watch the film *Wag the Dog* (here's the trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNo0BicRM8k>) and read/consult the screenplay at: <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Wag-the-Dog.html>

**Week 7: March 3**

**The Media and the Crisis**

Discussion of the mass media and crisis management in the political and corporate worlds. How the media covers crisis situations and affects the crisis environment. Examination of the increasing personalization of politics by the media. Problems of episodic coverage. The rise of fake news and its consequences. Discussion of how social media is changing the communications landscape. The impact of the media on crisis management strategies and tactics.

*Ethics Memorandum due*

**Week 8: March 10**

**Crisis Communications**

Exploration of communications, public relations, and social media tactics and strategies in crisis -- and potential crisis -- situations. Discussion of crafting of communications action plans; message development and delivery; advertising approaches; government and community relations activities; media, press and public relations efforts.

**Week 9: March 24**

**Debates**

Discussion of the role candidate debates play as a turning point in electoral campaigns, the impact of media on debates, debate preparation and follow-through. Negotiating the terms and conditions of political debates

**Week 10: March 31**

**Case Studies in Crisis Management**

Presentation of student group projects

**Week 11: April 7**

**Case Studies in Crisis Management**

Presentation of student group projects

**Week 12: April 14**

## **Negative Advertising**

Examination of the dynamics and impact of negative advertising in electoral politics today. Discussion of effective strategies to respond to negative advertising

### **Week 13: April 21**

#### **Planning for the Inevitable**

Examination of the tools and techniques for identifying, preventing, managing, and capitalizing on crisis situations. Discussion of strategic planning and crisis forecasting, crisis management plans, organizational structure, crisis aversion and response tactics. Exploration of the changing dynamics in American electoral politics and public advocacy and their implications for future crises and crisis management.

*Individual Research and Analysis Project due.*

#### ***Read (On Blackboard):***

- Michael Edwards, “The Essentials of Crisis Management” Campaigns and Elections, November 15, 2013