

# The Graduate School of Political Management

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

**M.P.S. in Political Management  
Fall, 2017**

**Managing a Congressional Office  
LGAF 6240 LH7**

**Meets Mondays 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM  
August 28 – December 11  
Hall of States**

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## **BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

### **Instructor**

Joseph Eule

Joseph J. Eule has over 30 years' experience in legislative affairs, communications, and elective politics, serving in senior positions for several high-profile congressmen, Secretary of the Army Pete Geren, the National Commission on the Future of the Army, the political non-profit Freedom's Watch, and public relations firm In Pursuit Of. Eule spent 24 years working in Congress, 17 of those as Chief of Staff to three House Members. During that time, Eule also oversaw ten congressional campaigns. He has lectured at the Army War College, is designated Adjunct Faculty at the Army Management Staff College, and trained Army General Officers in congressional relations and communications. Eule has a master's degree in economics from The George Washington University and a bachelor's degree in economics from Southern Connecticut State College.

### **Contact Information**

Mobile: 703-966-2582

[josepheule@verizon.net](mailto:josepheule@verizon.net)

### **Communication**

Email is the best way to communicate with me, but you can also try calling my mobile phone and if I'm not there, leave a message. No text messages please! I will usually acknowledge if not fully respond within 24 hours. You are also welcome to set up an appointment with me for a phone conversation or personal visit. A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. You are expected to check the site throughout the semester. Assigned readings and deliverables will be run through the course site. 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 participating in classroom activities. (There are no exams in this course.) 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://www.gwu.edu/%7Entegrity/code.html>.

### **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 me if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at [www.gwu.edu/~dss](http://www.gwu.edu/~dss).

### **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 in front of Lisner Auditorium 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**

Attendance will be taken the first two weeks as a means of verifying registered students. Thereafter no attendance will be taken. If a student is absent from class, she/he will be responsible for acquiring missed material from fellow classmates.

### **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, Political Management Program  
[larambrown@gwu.edu](mailto:larambrown@gwu.edu) | (202) 994-4545

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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### Legislative Affairs Program Objectives

Upon completion of the Master's degree in Legislative Affairs, students will:

1. Gain both theoretical and practical knowledge related to the U.S. Congress, general issues in the legislative arena, and how to effectively advance legislation;
2. Hone their oral and written communication skills in both theoretical and technical aspects of legislative affairs;
3. Be able to conduct cutting-edge research and engage in effective problem solving by learning critical thinking skills;
4. Learn how to work effectively with others, the value of collaborative work, and will understand ethical issues involved in the legislative arena.

### Course Description and Overview

This course will provide a practical look at how a congressional office is structured, organized, and managed. Students will develop a working understanding of the mechanics of setting up and operating a congressional office and learn how to make decisions to support the Members' political and legislative goals. Students will work on: strategies for setting legislative, communications, and political priorities; considerations in putting together an office budget; how to run communications and legislative projects; legal compliance and ethical standards and practices; and managing DC and district office staff in a way that best serves the Member's goals. Finally, students will learn to consider how a congressional office fits into the larger congressional structure and the vast lobbying and stakeholder community. The goal is to equip students with the know-how and skills necessary to successfully manage a congressional office. Students will be asked to put together office budgets, communications plans, legislative strategies, et al.

### Course Learning Objectives

Planning for success: Students will learn how to establish office priorities and goals (legislative and political), keep track of campaign promises made, put together an office budget, and hire staff who can achieve those priorities. Students will learn to make the kinds of trade-offs that a limited budget imposes on all congressional offices.

Managing people: A good staff can help propel even a young Member into an influential legislative and/or media player, while a bad staff can frustrate a Member's goals and perhaps cost him his seat. Students will learn how to organize and manage the DC staff in a way that complements the Member and his agenda.

Running a legislative project: Passing any kind of legislation is extraordinarily difficult, much harder than is supposed. Students will learn strategies for running a successfully legislative project that advances the Member's goals. As part of that, students will learn the importance of focusing on committee work to score legislative victories.

Communicating with constituents: Students will learn the various ways of communicating with a Members’ constituents through direct mail, email, social media, newsletters, town hall meetings, speeches, editorial boards, personal visits, et al. Students will also learn the difference in how to approach the national versus local media, how to prepare for media engagements, and how to approach your relationship with the press.

Managing the Member: Students will learn the importance of scheduling the Members’ time and how best to do so in a way that furthers her objectives. Further, the students will learn how to counteract outside influences that also demand the Members’ attention and can distract from the goals of the office – including family, contributors, former business associates, friends, et al.

Role of district office/constituent services: The role of the district office is often overlooked, but it is critical to a successful congressional operation. Students will learn how to navigate the challenges of managing a district office from Washington, DC and how to organize one for success, particularly regarding constituent services. Constituents are essentially the office’s “customers” and casework issues can hurt a Member politically if not done properly.

Maintaining Ethical Standards: Running afoul of House or Senate ethics rules runs can consume an office and lead to severe political consequences for the Member and staff. Students will learn how best to avoid ethics problems and run an office in compliance with the relevant chamber’s rules.

**Evaluation and Grading**

Students will be expected to show up for class each week ready to engage in discussion on what is going on in Congress and how it all relates to managing an office. We are likely to begin each class with a discussion of what went on the previous week in Congress and you will be asked to evaluate events and discuss how they might impact your Member’s district and what you might do in response. Students are encouraged to bring to class items that they think are particularly relevant to our course of study.

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Each student will be asked to select a district/Member to work for during the semester. Write a paper on the district.	Assess the district, its demographics, major media, major industries, and other important features a congressional office would want to know.	Sept. 11	10%
Write a paper outlining the goals of the office.	This will require students to take the Member’s wishes and establish measurable outcomes to ensure success.	Sept. 18	10%

Prepare an office budget, with an accompanying justification for your choices.	This will require students to reflect on the goals of the office and come to grips with the many trade-offs necessary to achieve those ends.	Sept. 25	10%
Prepare a staff org chart for both DC and district office and how much you will pay each staffer using the budget from previous assignment. Also do a job description for the position of press secretary.	This will require the student to make some tough decisions and trade-offs as well as take on the managerial responsibility of doing a job description.	Oct. 2	10%
Come up with an idea for a bill and write a paper on why you think your bill is a good idea and how you plan to get it passed.	Develop strategic thinking and planning.	Oct. 9	10%
Write a 700-800 word op-ed on the bill for publication in selected newspaper.	How to tell a story in a compelling way that resonates.	Oct. 16	10%
Answer ten questions on various ethical situations.	Students will come away from this assignment with a better understanding of ethics rules and how complicated then can be.	Nov. 27	10%
Write one last paper from a choice of three topics proscribed by the instructor.	This final project will challenge students to put what they've learned into a particular context.	Dec. 11	20%
Attendance and Participation	It is important to be in attendance and engaged in classroom discussion. Much of what will be learned will be taught in class and will not be available in the readings alone.		10%
Total			100%

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.

C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation.
C-	70-72 (lowest passing grade)	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 turning in an assignment late.

### Course Readings

In addition to the readings for each class as listed below, students are expected to keep current on what is happening in Congress throughout the semester by reading influential major national newspapers (e.g. *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, etc.), political publications (e.g. *Roll Call*, *Politico*), website/opinion magazines (*Weekly Standard*, *The Economist*, *National Review*, *Slate*, *Salon*, et al), political blogs (e.g. Power Line and Talking Points Memo), and political news aggregators like the Drudge Report and Real Clear Politics. We will likely be discussing topics in the news during class. Aside from the primary reading sources listed below, the instructor will be assigning current articles relevant to the coursework throughout the semester. Required reading material:

- *Surviving Inside Congress*, Fourth Edition by Mark Strand, Michael Johnson, and Jerome Climer, The Congressional Institute, 2015, ISBN: 9780963305718
- *Setting Course – A Congressional Management Guide*, Congressional Management Foundation, 2014, ISBN: 9781930473188
- *Keeping It Local – A Guide for Managing Congressional District & State Offices*, Congressional Management Foundation, 2010, ISBN-13: 9781930473133
- *House Ethics Manual* (pdf found under “Publications” section at: <http://ethics.house.gov/>) and *Senate Ethics Manual* (pdf found under the “Publications” tab here: <http://www.ethics.senate.gov/public/>)

### Tentative Course Calendar\*

\*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace of learning to reflect student progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with and adjustments to the course calendar.

#### August 28, 2017

##### *Introduction to Managing a Congressional Office*

This class will focus on an overview of the course, course requirements, class objectives, and rules. We also do a quick lesson on how congressional offices are organized – who does what. We will discuss how there is no “Congress” – only individual offices (the entrepreneurial congressional office). In this class, students will select a Member of Congress for whom they will become Chief of Staff. Their “district” will serve as basis for several projects throughout the year. Students will be asked to write a paper on “their” district for the next class.

*Reading for class*

- Lindsay Mark Lewis and Jim Arkedis, *So You've Won a Seat in Congress – Now What?*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/11/so-youve-won-election-to-congressnow-what/382421/>, The Atlantic, November 6, 2014.
- James Buchanan, *Public Choice – Politics Without Romance*, Policy, Vol. 19 No. 3, Spring 2003
- Chapters 1 and 2, *Surviving Inside Congress*

September 4, 2017

No Class – Labor Day Holiday

September 11, 2017

*Organizing Your Office and Setting Goals*

There is no one “right” way to organize a congressional office. They are as different as the Members who lead them. In this class, we will discuss some of the more popular ways to organize an office, their pluses and minuses. We will also discuss setting overall office goals. Students will be asked to write a paper for the next class outlining the goals of your office based on the Member and the district.

*Reading for Class*

- Chapters 8 and 9, *Surviving Inside Congress*
- Chapters 1 and 11, *Setting Course*

September 18, 2017

*Setting an Office Budget*

One of the most important aspects of managing a congressional office is setting an office budget. In this class we will discuss the trade-offs inherent in putting together a budget and how a budget should serve the goals of the Member. Students will be required to establish a detailed budget plan for their Member’s office for the next class.

*Reading for Class*

- Chapter 12, *Setting Course*

September 25, 2017

*Staffing Up*

Hiring the right staff is critical to the smooth operation of a congressional office. Just as important is organizing the staff in a way that is comfortable for the Member. In this class we will discuss all the considerations that go in to hiring and organizing staff. Students will then be asked to draw up an org chart for their office within parameters proscribed by the instructor, justifying their choices based on their district, Member committee assignments, etc. Students will also write a job description for the press secretary position in the office.

*Reading for Class*

- Chapter 4, *Setting Course*
- Chapter 3, *Surviving Inside Congress*
- *Developing Job Descriptions – A Management Brief*, Congressional Management Foundation, November 2012.

#### October 2, 2017

##### *Managing Legislative Projects*

The business of Congress is legislating, yet ironically it is probably the hardest thing to do. In this class we will discuss legislative strategies and the many ways and office can approach legislating and how to make decisions to maximize legislative success. For the next class, students will come up with an idea for a bill to be the cornerstone of their boss' legislative agenda and draft a legislative plan to pass that bill.

##### *Reading for Class*

- Chapter 5, *Surviving Inside Congress*
- Chapter 4, *Hitting the Ground Running*

#### October 9, 2017

##### *Managing the Press*

In the age of the 24/7 news cycle and social media, the ability of congressional offices to manage relations with the press has never been more important. Some Members take to the media while others avoid it like the plague. In this class, we will talk about how to think about the media and how to assess a Member's tolerance for media. For the next class, students will be asked to write a press release and 700-word op-ed about the bill they introduced the previous week.

##### *Reading for Class*

- Chapters 10 and 11, *Surviving Inside Congress*
- *Stop Blaming Me for Hurricane Katrina*, Michael Brown, Politico Magazine, August 27, 2015
- *A 'Cancer' on the Clinton Candidacy*, Glenn Thrush and Annie Karni, Politico, October 13, 2015

#### October 16, 2017

##### *Managing the Member*

Members of Congress are being pulled into a thousand different directions at the same time; the competition for their time is staggering. Not only that, but a Member is also being bombarded with outside influencers who may distract him/her from the established goals of the office. These could be family, contributors, former business associates, friends, etc. In this class students will learn how to navigate all the demands on a Member's time and techniques for ensuring every moment of the Member's time is maximized.

##### *Reading for Class*



- Chapter 15, *Setting Course*
- Chapter 5, *Keeping It Local*

October 23, 2017

Fall Break – no class.

October 30, 2017

*Managing Your People*

Working in Congress is not easy; it is certainly not as glamorous as it appears on television. There are lots of long nights and grunt work for comparably meager pay. And still young people line up work there. In this class students will learn how to manage staff to maximize output and avoid burnout. In-class discussion will also focus on how to manage between generations.

*Reading for Class*

- *Life in Congress – Aligning Work and Life in the U.S. House and Senate*, Society for Human Resource Management, Congressional Management Foundation, 2012.
- Chapter 13, *Setting Course*

November 6, 2017

*Communicating with Constituents*

A sizeable portion of any congressional office budget is usually dedicated to communicating with constituents. How you communicate has a lot to do with the kind of district you have, its size, and its demographics. In this class, we will learn how to establish a constituent communication plan that makes sense and works.

*Reading for Class*

- *Communicating with Congress – How Citizen Advocacy Is Changing Mail Operations on Capitol Hill*, Congressional Management Foundation, 2011.
- Chapter 14, *Setting Course*

November 13, 2017

*District Office and Constituent Services*

District offices play a critical role in serving the Member by doing outreach and casework, but too often those who work in those offices feel neglected and unappreciated. In this class we will discuss the importance of the district office and how to get the most of out of them.

*Reading for Class*

- *Casework in a Congressional Office: Background, Rules, Laws, and Resources*, R. Eric Petersen, Congressional Research Service, November 24, 2014.
- Chapter 7, *Setting Course*
- Introduction, Chapter 1 and Chapter 7, *Keeping it Local*

November 20, 2017

### *Ethical Considerations*

The last thing you want to confront running a congressional office is dealing with an ethical issue involving your boss. Ethical problems are the easiest way for your boss to lose his job...and you to lose yours. Students will learn how best to avoid ethics problems and run an office in compliance with the relevant chamber's rules. Students will be given a take-home assignment asking them to determine the ethical propriety of ten various situations.

### *Reading for Class*

- Chapter 14, *Surviving Inside Congress*
- Chapter 16, *Setting Course*
- House Ethics Highlights Overview Booklet

### November 27, 2017

#### *Committee and Leadership Staff*

Accomplishing a legislative objective is almost impossible without the support of committee and/or leadership staff. In this class we will learn the importance of focusing on committee work and how committee and staff can assist you in achieving your office's goals.

### *Reading for Class*

Chapter 4, *Surviving Inside Congress*

Chapter 2, *Setting Course*

### December 4, 2017

#### *Working with the Administration*

I will find a guest speaker who has worked in both Congress and the executive branch to discuss how the branches view each other and how congressional offices can be more effective when dealing with the executive branch.

### December 11, 2017

Final papers due and wrap-up discussion.