

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management

Fall

August 31 – December 9, 2015

Interpreting and Strategizing with Polls

6490

3 Credits

Monday, 6:10pm – 8:00pm

Funger, 222

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

Mark Penn

Preferred Email: mark@stagwell.com

Dritan Nesho

Preferred Email: dnesho@post.harvard.edu

Cory Brown

Preferred Email: pcorybrown@gmail.com

Miguel Torhton

Preferred Email: mtorhton@gwmail.gwu.edu

Communication

This course is being team taught. Please address all electronic communications to all instructors. We prefer to be contacted by e-mail, unless it is an emergency, in which case you may call us at the contact numbers which will be shared in class. 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, one of us will be available each week for an hour prior to class.

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://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/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 your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at 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 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

Attending class is required. Should you find yourself with a scheduling conflict, please contact us as soon as you are aware of the issue to let us know that you will absent, otherwise, it will be considered an unexcused absence and it will negatively count against your participation grade.

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 | 202-994-4545

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

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 developed strategy.
4. Find, engage and motivate the essential and appropriate leaders, professionals and citizens to achieve the developed strategy.
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

This course will teach you how political polling is used to advise leaders, whether you are working in a presidential campaign, advising the President of the United States, or helping push new policies in government. We will give you a rare glimpse of how it's done behind closed doors.

Course Learning Objectives

The first half of this course introduces you to the elements of public opinion research and the mechanics of polling. The second half of the course will focus on a series of in depth case studies from the Clinton Presidency (1994-1999) to show you how polling, policy, and politics interact and how polling is used to solve high-value problems and provide guidance in high-stake scenarios at the candidate and presidential level.

Throughout the course of the class you will learn

1. How to design survey research
2. How to analyze survey data
3. How to build a model of public opinion
4. How to translate survey data into advice for leaders
5. How to put your advice forward in a cogent and convincing memo

Course Requirements

We expect from you active engagement in the course. That includes participation in the class, completing several smaller assignments throughout the semester individually and with team members, and writing an in-depth memo at the end of the semester. The smaller assignments will consist of question framing, questionnaire design, data analysis, and memo writing. We will teach you how to write questions and design surveys and how to analyze survey data, and we will work with you to develop your paper.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
<p>#1. Individual Assignment: Examples of good and bad poll questions.</p> <p>Pick a policy or political topic of interest. Submit 5 examples of good and 5 examples of bad poll questions, and explain why. Extra credit if you're able to find these examples in public polling (current or past).</p>	Demonstrate the ability to write unbiased, relevant and response worthy survey questions. Distinguish between good and bad questions.	Week 2	5 points (5%)
<p>#2. Individual Assignment: Develop a poll outline.</p> <p>Pick your favorite presidential candidate. Conduct some research about them. Based on what you learn define 5-10 key areas of research and flesh them out into a survey outline.</p>	Demonstrate goal-oriented critical thinking necessary for putting together a strategic poll for the campaign.	Week 3	5 points (5%)
<p>#3. Team Assignment: Develop a draft questionnaire.</p> <p>Work with your assigned team to develop a draft questionnaire for your assigned campaigns.</p>	Collaborate together to define the survey and questionnaire.	Week 4	5 points (5%)
<p>#4. Team Assignment: Present poll outline and strategy to class.</p>	Ability to verbally explain strategy and implementation to a client.	Week 7	5 points (5%)
<p>#5. Team Assignment: Finalize questionnaire/Prepare surveys for fielding.</p>	Distinguish between good and bad ideas/ feedback in order to design a proper survey instrument	Week 8	10 points (10%)

#6. Individual Assignment: Topline poll results analysis. 1-2 page team memo outlining the topline results of your polls.	Distill and communicate key findings of the poll.	Week 11	10 points (10%)
#7. Team Assignment: Present poll findings in class.		Week 12	10 points (10%)
#8. Final Assignment: Strategy Memo.		Week 14	40 points (40%)
Attendance and Participation	It is important to be in class and to be 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 points (10%)
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 will be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

Required Text and Learning Materials

Mark Penn, *Microtrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes* (2007: Hatchette)

V.O.Key Jr., *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting, 1936-1960*

Douglas E. Schoen, *Power of the Vote: Electing Presidents, Overthrowing Dictators, and Promoting Democracy Around the World* (2008: Harper)

Norman A. Bradburn, *Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design* (2004: John Wiley & Sons)

Herbert F. Weisberg, *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis* (1996: Sage Publications)

Evan Thomas, Andrew Murr, Leslie Kaufmann, Debra Rosenberg and Karen Breslau, *Back From the Dead: How Clinton Survived the Republican Revolution* (1997: Newsweek)

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, *Who Leads Whom?: Presidents, Policy, and the Public* (2006: University of Chicago Press)

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.

August 31, 2015

Week 1 - Introduction

Topic and Content Covered:

- What is Public Opinion and Polling?
- How is Public Opinion Used in Politics?
 - Giving Advice versus the Headlines
 - How does a poll for a Candidate or the President differ from what you see in the Washington Post?
 - Examples of polls for advising, from campaigns, politics, and corporations.

Reading Due Today:

- Bradburn, Norman A., *Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design* (2004: John Wiley & Sons), Ch. 1-3, 12 (recommend reading full book)

September 14, 2015

Week 2 – Ways of Measuring Public Opinion

Topic and Content Covered:

- Data Sources
- Behavioral Data (e.g., elections)

- Surveys
 - Elements of a Survey
 - Basics of Survey Design
 - Asking Good Questions
 - Question Logic
- New Technologies

Reading Due Today:

- Herbert F. Weisberg, *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis* (1996: Sage Publications), Part 1: Survey Design (Ch. 1-7)

Assignment #1 Due Today – Pick a policy or political topic of interest. Define a research question around it. Submit 5 examples of good and 5 examples of bad poll questions, and explain why. Extra credit if you're able to find these examples in public polling (current or past).

September 21, 2015

Week 3 – Data Analysis and Statistical Methods

Topic and Content Covered:

- Key elements of data analysis
- Data and models with multiple variables

Reading Due Today:

- Weisberg, Part 2: Data Analysis (Ch. 8-14)

Assignment #2 Due Today – Pick your favorite presidential candidate (or the one that interests you the most). Conduct some research about them: their message, their bio, their positions, key issues they've dealt with or might strategically focus on. Based on what you learn define 5-10 key areas of research and flesh them out into a survey outline.

September 28, 2015

Week 4 – Presenting Information

Topic and Content Covered:

- Know your audience
- Making arguments with data
- Graphics and models

Reading Due Today:

- Weisberg, Part 3: Survey Guidelines (Ch. 15-17)
- 3 Memos selected in class from the following list:

Mark Penn, Hillary Campaign Strategy Memos from the [Atlantic Archive](#)

- [The Plan, 10/2006](#)
- [Launch Strategy, 12/21/2006](#)
- [Strategy Memo, 3/19/2008](#)
- [Strategy Memo, 4/8/2007](#)

- E. [Strategy Memo for New Hampshire, 12/30/2007](#)
- F. [Strategy Memo, 3/5/2008](#)
- G. [Path to Victory, 3/30/2008](#)
- H. [Hillary Clinton: the Right Choice the Democratic Party - the Facts and Figures](#)

Assignment #3 Due Today – Work with your assigned team to develop a draft questionnaire for your assigned campaigns.

October 5, 2015

Week 5 – Building Models: Micro Trends, Soccer Moms, and beyond

Topic and Content Covered:

- Data + Creativity = Strategy
- What is a Model?
- How to turn data into coherent models
- What are Microtrends? Definition and examples
- How to use
- Uncovering Soccer Moms

Reading Due Today:

- Mark Penn, *Microtrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes* (2007: Hatchette), selected chapters in class

October 12, 2015

Week 6 – V.O. Key and the Responsible Electorate

Topic and Content Covered:

- Types of Campaigns: Base vs. Swing
- V.O. Key's Responsible Electorate and voter typology

Reading Due Today:

- V.O. Key Jr., *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting, 1936-1960*, Ch. 1-6

October 19, 2015

Week 7 – Draft Poll Presentations/Review Session

Topic and Content Covered:

- Student teams present poll outlines in class and receive feedback

Reading Due Today:

- Get started on October 26 readings

Assignment #4 Due Today – Present poll outline and team strategy to class.

October 26, 2015

Week 8 – Advising the President: Case Study #1

Topic and Content Covered:

- 1995 Congress and the Government Shut Down

Reading Due Today:

- Douglas E. Schoen, *Power of the Vote: Electing Presidents, Overthrowing Dictators, and Promoting Democracy Around the World* (2008: Harper)

Assignment #5 Due Today – Submit final team questionnaires for fielding.

November 2, 2015

Week 9 – Advising the President: Case Study #2

Topic and Content Covered:

- 1996 State of the Union Address & Re-Election

Reading Due Today:

- President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union Address
- Evan Thomas, Andrew Murr, Leslie Kaufmann, Debra Rosenberg and Karen Breslau, *Back From the Dead: How Clinton Survived the Republican Revolution* (1997: Newsweek) p. 220-236, 273-278

November 9, 2015

Week 10 – Advising the President: Case Study #3

Topic and Content Covered:

- Clinton's Foreign Policy Interventions: Bosnia & Iraq

Reading Due Today:

- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, *Who Leads Whom?: Presidents, Policy, and the Public* (2006: University of Chicago Press)

Students Receive Poll Results.

November 16, 2015

Week 11 – Advising the President: Case Study #4

Topic and Content Covered:

- Clinton's Impeachment

Reading Due Today: Light reading assigned the week before.

Assignment #6 Due Today – 1-2 page memo outlining the topline results of your poll.

November 23, 2015

Week 12 – Poll findings presented in class

Topic and Content Covered:

- Students receive feedback

Assignment #7 Due Today – In class team presentation of poll results.

November 30, 2015

Week 13 – Advising Presidential Candidates

Topic and Content Covered:

- Polling and Strategy in a Presidential Campaign
- Political Communication Model
- 2016 Election

Reading Due Today: Light reading assigned the week before.

December 7, 2015

Week 14 – Wrap-Up

Topic and Content Covered:

- Teacher’s reading of the polls
- Review of topics covered and key learnings

Final Assignment #8 Due Today – Strategy Memo.

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.