

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management
Fall 2016

Digital Strategy
6452
3 Credits

Instructor
Ian Koski

BASIC INFORMATION

Instructor:

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Communication

I prefer to be contacted by e-mail, unless it's an emergency, in which case you may call the cell phone number above. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours to all student e-mails, depending on urgency. If you would like to arrange an appointment to discuss your work or progress, we'll find a time that works for both of us.

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 instructor and the students. All homework assignments must be submitted through Blackboard. Students can access the course site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at (202) 994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

THE COURSE

This class is an introduction to digital strategy in modern politics, with the curriculum aimed at three types of political professionals:

- Managers of campaigns and organizations that will utilize digital strategy;
- Consultants and other professionals wishing to better integrate with digital strategy into their areas of expertise; and
- People interested in eventually working as full-time digital strategists.

Modern digital strategy is an increasingly specialized field, and this class is designed to provide students with a foundation on which to build and innovate. The class will help you get the skills to develop and implement a digital strategy by employing the tools and tactics appropriate for the political situation.

This course is organized around three subject areas:

- Strategy: Strategic planning, digital strategy principles, testing, and analytics
- Tactics: Data, websites, content, email, social media, and advertising
- Applications: Fundraising, candidate campaigns, issue advocacy, governing, and consulting

By the end of the course, students will know how to:

- Design a digital strategy for a client (candidate or organization);
- Deploy the strategy, or implement and execute on the developed digital plan;
- Implement and manage the digital tools associated with the strategy; and
- Measure and adapt the digital strategy.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

Success in this class will be measured with a blend of written assignments, presentations, and examinations, as well as class participation.

Writing Quality

Poor writing quality suggests a writer that is unprofessional, undisciplined, disrespectful of the reader, uninterested in details, and indifferent to the consequences. The smartest, most insightful, and most consequential political thoughts are undermined by bad writing. Good writing, meanwhile, can mask lackluster ideas and mediocre analysis.

This is graduate school. This is a graduate school dedicated to persuasion politics. Basic communication skills are absolutely fundamental.

For native English speakers, there is simply no excuse for submitting written assignments with spelling errors, typos, poor punctuation, and other hallmarks of poor writing quality. Not understanding the proper usage of your/you're; their/there/they're; and its/it's is simply unacceptable at this point in your academic careers.

GWU offers assistance to students wishing to improve their writing quality. If you're concerned about yours, I'd implore you to take advantage of it.

Written Assignments

Rather than asking students to draft written materials that will serve no practical purpose outside the classroom, the assignments in this class aim to be relevant to the real world. Instead of essays, homework assignments come in the form of memos, blog posts, and op-eds.

Memos

Memo assignments should come in the form of a standard business memorandum from you to the instructor. [Click here for formatting advice](#) from Purdue University's Online Writing Lab. Memos should be as long as is necessary to convey the required information.

Blog Posts

Blog entries can take a variety of forms, but are fairly simple in structure. They are similar to op-eds, but typically shorter, punchier, accompanied by an image, and written informally. [Click here for some blogging advice](#) from a contributor to Forbes. Blog posts should be roughly 400 words.

Op-eds

Op-eds – short for “opposite editorial” – are opinion pieces in newspapers written by individuals wishing to present a view different than that of the editorial board of the newspaper.

[Click here for some good op-ed advice](#) from Oregon State University, or [click here for good tips](#) from PR Newswire. Op-eds should be roughly 700 words.

Writing Style

This is the real world, where we don’t use MLA style or the Chicago Manual of Style. While you won’t be graded on your adherence to Associated Press style, I assure you that you will fare better in the professional world if you start learning it.

GRADED ELEMENT	LEARNING OBJECTIVE(S) ADDRESSED	DUE DATE	WEIGHT
Weekly Campaign Status Reports: Innovative digital strategies are happening right now. Students will track and present on how their assigned campaign is using digital platforms; evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign’s strategy; and make recommendations for improvements.	Assessment of a campaign’s digital strategy with a level of scrutiny beyond that of a passive subscriber.	Called at random to report once during the semester	5 points
This Week in Digital: After the presentation of that week’s status reports, other students will openly discuss tactics used by other candidates that week.	Assessment of a campaign’s digital strategy with a level of scrutiny beyond that of a passive subscriber.	Weekly	5 points
Pop Quizzes: Four quizzes will be administered over the course of the semester to give students a chance to demonstrate their understanding of the material.			20 points
Assignment #1: Write an RFP for the campaign website you want a vendor to build.	Build on political management business skill of scoping a programmatic need, and developing criteria for success.	Week 5 – Sept. 28	5 points
Assignment #2: Write an op-ed on how you would change Facebook to be more useful to campaigns.	Strategic thinking about what makes a content platform useful for politics.	Week 8 – Friday, Oct. 15	5 points

Assignment #3: Write a post for your candidate's blog responding to the October 9 debate.	Apply rapid-response thinking to real-time political situation.	Week 8 – Oct. 12	5 points
Assignment #4: Create an email and social media editorial content calendar for the final month of your campaign, and write one email and set of social posts.	Show competency in how to plan and execute on a core component of a digital strategy.	Week 10 – Nov. 2	10 points
Assignment #5: Write an op-ed arguing for or against the use of cookies and remarketing tools.	Demonstrate understanding of the privacy aspects of marketing and personalization techniques.	Week 12 – Nov. 16	5 points
Final Strategy Memo	Half of the final assessment, students will develop a written digital strategy for a future gubernatorial candidate.	Week 13 – Nov. 30	
Final Exam	Half of the final assessment, students will be tested on the material shared in class.	Week 14 – Dec. 7	
Class Attendance/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.	Ongoing	10 points

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).

Quizzes

Four unannounced quizzes will be given throughout the semester. They will be brief and administered promptly at the top of the class in lieu of the status reports. The material being quizzed will most likely come from the previous week's class, but may come from earlier classes.

Students who arrive for class after a quiz has been administered will receive 0 points for that quiz.

Students who miss a class in which a quiz has been administered without having notified the professor about why will receive 0 points for that quiz.

Students who know they will miss a class ahead of time and notify the professor prior to the start of the class will be given the opportunity to take a make-up quiz later in the semester outside of class at a central time and place of the professor's choosing. No student will be allowed to compensate for having missed more than one quiz. Students who did poorly on a quiz and want a better grade will not be allowed to take the make-up quiz.

Marking Criteria

It's important to see your assessments as a valuable part of the learning process. The assessments have been designed to help you hone certain critical skills and identify areas you are strong in. While your mark is important for your overall performance, it's also important to help you identify areas you need to work on to improve your skills. At the beginning of the semester you'll be given the specific marking criteria for how you'll be assessed in your assignments.

Declaration of Originality

In this age of sharing content, each student is asked to make a declaration with the submission of each assignment that their media content was created specifically for this class. It is fine for you to create content that you may use in your work, however, you cannot repurpose material that was created outside of this class for an assignment.

This statement should be included as a footer on each assignment:

"I certify that this assignment constitutes my original work. It was not written for me, and I have not misappropriated anyone else's material to create it. I acknowledge that there will be academic consequences if that is found not to be the case."

Reading Required Text and Learning Materials

Digital media is a fast-evolving field. As such, new insights and thoughtful content is published constantly. To ensure the best reading list, you'll be issued a revised reading list at the first meeting and updates to the reading assignments are likely throughout the course. A large part of your reading for this class will be online and involve following the latest developments in new media.

Required Books:

- Content Marketing: Think Like a Publisher - How to Use Content to Market Online and in Social Media, by Rebecca Lieb, 2011.
- Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook: How to Tell Your Story in a Noisy Social World, Gary Vaynerchuk, 2013.

Reading listed in the syllabus is subject to change. In fact, it's likely to change. Links to reading material will appear on Blackboard each week under "Assigned Reading" and should be take precedence over any of the web-linked reading listed here.

TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR*

Last updated: August 28, 2016

August 31 (Week 1)

Topic and Content Covered: Digital Strategy – What is it? What is it not?

- Introductions
- What is a digital strategy and why is it important?
- Highlights from OFA 2008: the game-changer
- Principles of digital strategy
- Campaign and organization assignments
- Grading and the final examination

Assignments for Next Class:

- Complete the student survey by Friday night
- Subscribe to the outbound digital communications of your assigned campaign
- Subscribe to the outbound digital communications of the Clinton and Trump campaigns
- Reading for Week 2

September 7 (Week 2)

Topic and Content Covered: Strategic Planning, Acquisition, and Data

- Strategic planning for digital
- Crafting an acquisition strategy
- Using data to win a campaign

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring
- Reading for Week 3

September 14 (Week 3)

This class will meet remotely via video video conference.

Topic and Content Covered: Digital Strategy in the Presidential Campaign

- The digital goals of a presidential campaign
- Building a digital strategy for a presidential campaign
- How candidates announce for president
- The 2016 campaign so far

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring

- Reading for Week 4

September 21 (Week 4)

Topic and Content Covered: Websites, Mobile, and Content

- Website strategy
- Website technology primer
- Mobile strategy
- Content strategy

Reading Due:

- None, but if you haven't started the books due in Weeks 5 and 6 yet... you should

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring
- Write an RFP for the campaign website you want a vendor to build.
- Reading for Week 5

September 28 (Week 5)

Topic and Content Covered: Social Media, Part I

- Virality
- Content marketing
- Web video
- Social media platforms

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring
- Reading for Week 6

October 5 (Week 6)

Topic and Content Covered: Social Media, Part II

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Snapchat
- Social media strategy

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring
- Write an op-ed on how you would change Facebook to be more useful to campaigns – Due October 15.
- Reading for Week 7

Sunday, October 9 (Week 7)

The second presidential debate will be during this class. This class will very likely meet off-site to accommodate an immersive debate-watch experience.

Topic and Content Covered: Digital Rapid Response Strategy

- Using digital tactics to react strategically

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring
- Write a post for the blog of your candidate's campaign (as assigned in class) spinning the presidential debate – Due October 12.

- Reading for Week 8

October 12 (Week 8)

Topic and Content Covered: Social Media, Part 3 (Video) and Digital Organizing

- How digital video has evolved into a dominant political force
- Producing videos for modern campaigning
- Digital strategies for recruiting, mobilizing, and organizing volunteers

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring
- Reading for Week 9

October 19 – No class (rescheduled for October 9)

October 26 (Week 9)

Topic and Content Covered: Email

- Managing an email program
- Writing political emails
- Building an email calendar
- Measuring success of an email program

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring
- Create an email and social media editorial content calendar for the final month of your campaign, and write one email and set of social posts.
- Reading for Week 10

November 2 (Week 10)

Topic and Content Covered: Digital Advertising

- Building a digital advertising program
- Optimizing landing pages for acquisition

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring
- Reading for Week 11

November 9 (Week 11)

Guest Speaker:

- Nickie Titus, former Digital Director of Ready for Hillary; Kaine for Virginia

Topic and Content Covered: Raising Money Online

- Digital fundraising strategy
- Raising from existing supporters
- Raising from prospective supporters

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued campaign monitoring
- Write an op-ed arguing for or against the use of remarketing cookies and other tracking tools by political campaigns.
- Reading for Week 12
- Prepare any questions you have about the final strategy proposal and final exam

November 16 (Week 12)

Topics and Content Covered: Design and Branding

- Why design matters to modern campaigns
- Designing and managing a political brand
- Q&A about final strategy proposal and final exam

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued presidential campaign monitoring
- Reading for Week 13
- Final strategy memo
- Prepare for final exam

November 30 (Week 13)

Topic and Content Covered: Niche Digital Strategies

- Digital strategy for issue advocacy campaigns
- Digital strategy for elected officials and government organizations

Assignments for Next Class:

- Continued presidential campaign monitoring
- Reading for Week 11

December 7 (Week 14) – Final exam

*The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress or teachable current event opportunities. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar posted on Blackboard.

RESOURCES

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>.

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 Juan Valdez Coffee Shop, 1889 F St., NW 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. The knowledge shared in this course is not derived principally from books or reading, but from engagement in class presentations and discussions. Should you find yourself with a scheduling conflict, please email me as soon as you are aware of the issue to let me know that you will absent. Otherwise, it will be considered an unexcused absence and it will negatively count against your participation grade.

Classroom Technology Policy

Students are welcome to bring a laptop or tablet computer to class for the purpose of taking notes, but are cautioned against letting it become a distraction or otherwise causing disengagement from the class discussion. It's easy to get lost checking email or browsing Facebook, but hiding behind your laptop and failing to participate in class discussions will negatively affect your grade.

Classroom Social Media Policy

The contents of presentations and lectures are intended only for the benefit of enrolled students and should be considered "off the record." With the exception of for thanking guest speakers, students are expected to refrain from posting about the contents of this course on Twitter, Facebook, or other social media platforms. Be cool.

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. We welcome your feedback about the course throughout the semester. It is helpful for us to hear how you are progressing with the materials and what exercises, readings, and lectures you find most helpful to learning about digital strategy.

Intellectual Property and Copyrights

Unless explicitly authorized by the instructor in writing, course materials, instructor presentations and lectures, class discussions, quizzes, assignments, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording, copy, alteration, distribution and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.

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