The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management
Summer 2015
May 18—July 25, 2015

Applied Political Communications
PMGT 6402, Section 10
3 Credits

Tuesday/7:10-9:40 pm
Duques 361

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructors
FIONA CONROY
JONATHAN E. KAPLAN

Contact Information
Phone Number: (202) 210-2829
Email Address: FIONACONROY@GMAIL.COM

Fiona is a Senior Vice President at Mack-Sumner Communications, one of the nation’s leading Democratic communications firms. Her clients include Planned Parenthood, Sierra Club, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf and congressional and state legislative candidates across the country.

In the 2012 election cycle, Fiona managed U.S. Senator Joe Manchin’s successful re-election campaign in West Virginia. She previously served as North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue’s Campaign Manager and as Executive Director of the Pennsylvania House Democratic Campaign Committee, one of the nation’s largest and most complex legislative caucus operations. She has also worked on campaigns in Virginia, where she currently lives.

Fiona has a Master’s degree in Political Management and Bachelor’s degree in History, both from The George Washington University.

Fiona has served on The George Washington University Alumni Association Board of Directors since 2009. She currently serves as the Vice President of Programs.
Contact Information
Phone Number: (917) 583-1955
Email Address: JONATHANEKAPLAN@GMAIL.COM

Jonathan E. Kaplan is the communications officer for the Washington Office of the Open Society Foundations. He works closely with the staff to develop and implement communications and advocacy strategies on behalf of the Foundations.

Since 1996, Jonathan has worked on a wide range of domestic and international policy issues as a journalist and a communications director and speechwriter in the Obama administration. Most recently, from 2009 to 2012, he served in the U.S. Department of State as the communications director and speechwriter for the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Ellen Tauscher and for Deputy Secretary of State Thomas R. Nides.

From 2002 to 2009, he was a senior staff writer for The Hill newspaper, the Washington, D.C., correspondent for the Portland Press Herald-Maine Sunday Telegram, and a freelance reporter. In addition, he has served as an aide in Vice President Gore’s office, as a legislative assistant for former U.S. Rep. Ken Bentsen (Texas), and an economic policy analyst at the Progressive Policy Institute.

Jonathan has a B.A. from Colby College in Waterville, Maine, and an M.A. in Public Policy from the University of Chicago. He lives in Washington with his wife and two-year-old son.

Communication
This course is being team taught. Please address all electronic communications to both instructors. We prefer to be contacted by e-mail, unless it is an emergency, in which case you may call us at the cell phone numbers above. 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 [TBD] 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@email.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 development of a communications strategy.
4. Find, engage, and motivate the essential government officials, lawmakers, professionals/influencers, and voters/citizens to implement your strategy and achieve your goal(s).
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

In politics, whether you are working to elect a candidate or pass legislation, learning how to communicate with and reach groups you need to inform, influence, or persuade—and get them to organize and mobilize—is the key ingredient to winning.

Successful political and issue advocacy campaigns reach the right people with the right messages. They develop messages, come up with ideas on how to communicate those messages, and deliver those messages. The campaigns know their audiences.

This course is designed for GSPM students to learn the differences between specialized forms of communication. The class is designed to help students build a foundation based on the fundamentals of political communication; learn specific tools and aspects of communications; and then connect the dots on how to conceive of, design, and implement a communications strategy to achieve specific campaign goals.

This will be an applied knowledge class. Students will be asked to use what they have learned to assess current campaign strategies and rhetoric to understand, interpret, and advise on-going political campaigns, issue advocacy campaigns, and work within crisis situations. Students will continue to learn how to evaluate and dissect opponents’ messages with a critical and strategic eye.

We will review previous elections, and current political campaigns and advocacy campaigns as case studies to inform our thinking and provide a base of knowledge to draw on in the future.
Course Learning Objectives

1. Analyze and understand the construction of campaign messages and the dynamics of political communication in an election.
2. Develop effective political messages that consider issues, such as strengths, weaknesses, vocabulary, and timing.
3. Adapt political communications to respond to events, while continuing to align and reinforce longer term goals and strategies.
4. Write well-organized documents intended to effectively communicate your point of view and be more influential inside a campaign structure.
5. Formulate and execute political communications and strategies using paid, earned, and owned media across traditional and digital media channels.

Course Requirements

Every week, students must show up prepared to discuss what you have read in relevant political blogs and news sites (these should be part of your daily reading), as each class will begin with a discussion of the previous week’s events and happenings. In our discussions, you will be asked to evaluate events and discuss their impact on electoral politics. You may also be asked to share something you read that week that you feel was beneficial to your ongoing understanding of political campaigns and/or campaign rhetoric, tactics, and the use of images.
## Evaluation and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Learning Objective(s) Addressed</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1: Memo to Candidate</td>
<td>How to assess the media environment, advise and prepare a candidate for an interview, and predict what questions reporters will ask.</td>
<td>5/26</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2: Storytelling Exercise</td>
<td>How to tell the same narrative to different audiences using different tools and techniques.</td>
<td>6/16</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 3: Advocacy Campaign</td>
<td>Prepare a two-week long communications plan for an organization on an advocacy issue.</td>
<td>6/30</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Quizzes</td>
<td>Occasional pop quizzes to assess whether you are reading news about politics.</td>
<td>Random/in-class</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project: Communications Plan</td>
<td>Design a communications plan for a political or issue campaign, and adapt that strategy.</td>
<td>7/21</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>In-class presentations of assignments and of final project.</td>
<td>5/26; 6/16; 6/30, 7/21</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance/ Participation</td>
<td>It is important to be in class and engaged with class. Much of what will be learned will be taught in class and will not be available in the readings alone.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>=100%</td>
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Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade*</th>
<th>Grading Standard</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100 Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93 Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89 Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>presentation, but needs some minor work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86 Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a “B” is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>viewed as unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82 You’ve completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79 Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motivation and concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76 Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>minimal motivation and concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72 (lowest grade to pass) Poor performance. Major errors, too many</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 70 Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

**Required Text and Learning Materials to Purchase**

*Campaign Communication and Political Marketing*
By Philippe J. Maarek (Author)

*Brand Media Strategy, Intergraded Communications Planning in the Digital Era,*
By Antony Young

**PLEASE NOTE: Additional Required Texts That Will Be Posted on Blackboard**

**Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials**

Jonathan’s recommended readings (not required): *Game Change, What It Takes, Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics; The Boys on the Bus; Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail.*

Fiona’s recommended readings (not required): *Words that Work* by Frank Luntz; *Made to Stick* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath; *POP!* by Sam Horn
Week 1
INTRODUCTION: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MESSAGING STRATEGY
(CONROY AND KAPLAN)

What is applied political communications? Where and how does your communications and campaign strategy intersect? In this class we will discuss the elements of communications planning, and how these determine who you need to reach, influence, and target. Additionally, the class will explore how to construct a winning narrative.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- Overview of the course, books and outside readings
- In-class expectations and assignments
- How should you think about communications and writing?
- What is the messaging environment and how does it impact your plans?
- What are communication tools and channels?
- Communication planning and the situation analysis
  - Who are the voters/supporters you have, who are the voters/supporters you want or need?
  - Who is your audience? Who do you want to persuade? What action do you want them to take?
- Demographics and Geographics
- Apply your candidates to the race and issues to the environment, identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Formulating a winning narrative: What’s your rationale for running and for winning?
- What is your budget?

Reading Due Today: None
Assignment(s) Due Today: None

Week 2
THINKING ABOUT THE BRAND: CORNFLAKES vs. CANDIDATES (CONROY)

How branding works with consumers, and voters alike.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

- Corporate vs. Political branding
- Building, maintaining and defending your brand
- The Party Brand vs. the Candidate Brand
- Social media, branding and social awareness
- Brands change with user experience & the death of a brand
- Demographic and ethnic targeting and the brand
Reading Due Today: *The Responsive Chord* (pp. 80-107) – posted on Blackboard  
*Brand Media Strategy* (pp. 1-48)  
Assignment Due Today: Assignment #1

**Week 3**  
**ELEMENTS OF YOUR COMMUNICATION PLAN & BUILDING YOUR COMMUNICATION MODEL (KAPLAN)**

In this class, we will start building a communications plan to achieve the campaign goals. We will introduce the topics like campaign structure, planning, and execution.

**Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:**

- Who is on the communications team?  
- Construction of a message grid  
- Role of research (survey research, focus groups, and opposition research)  
- Creating and managing content and developing an editorial calendar  
- Role of social media: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and integration with traditional media  
- What are, who are, and can you cultivate and leverage “super friends”/“validators”?

Reading Due Today: Campaign Communication and Political Marketing Part(s) 1 & 2  
Assignment(s) Due Today: None

**Week 4**  
**YOU’RE IN THE CONTENT BUSINESS (CONROY)**

Whether you’re a political campaign or an organization running an issue-based campaign, you are now in the content business. It’s up to you to produce original and compelling content and to “push it out” via traditional and digital distribution channels.

**Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:**

- The power of image and words  
- Emotion, storytelling and other ways to get your content to stick  
- Content production  
- Content placement and media channels

Reading Due Today: *Campaign Communication and Political Marketing*, Part 3 (selected readings, TBD)  
*Made to Stick* (pp. 3-24; pp. 25-62 – posted on Blackboard  
*Words That Work* (pp. 149-178) – posted on Blackboard  
Assignment(s) Due Today: None
Week 5
MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND CONTENT DELIVERY (KAPLAN)

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:
- What is the communications ecosystem?
- How are your voters consuming media? Where do they get their news?
- Content is King: What makes for powerful content?
- Using your content for maximum impact
- To whom and where to pitch stories?
- When to give a reporter an exclusive?
- How to “push out” your content?
- Syncing the content with the distribution channels

Reading Due Today: Campaign Communication and Political Marketing, Chapters 4 and 5
Assignment(s) Due Today: Assignment #2

Week 6
THE PRESS & COMMUNICATIONS (KAPLAN)

Every aspect of the news industry is under enormous strain. News organizations face severe financial pressure. Publishers demand more of editors. Editors demand more of reporters, who are asked to file more stories, faster than ever, and better than everyone else. They are asked to write more mediums, including print, digital, video, and social media. Therefore, reporters inevitably expect and demand more of communications directors working on campaigns, for advocacy organizations, and in the government. Frankly, dealing with reporters is sometimes challenging and complicated, and for some, even nerve-wracking. We will discuss strategies for working with the press and getting the most favorable coverage possible in this fast-paced demanding environment and give you the tools to protect those you are working for and yourselves.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:
- Role of the press in your campaign
- Understanding the point of view of journalist
- Why (good) writing matters
- What does on-the-record, off-the-record, and background mean?
- The political news cycle
- Important dates within an election cycle, including FEC filing periods, holidays, Congressional recess, anniversaries, and holidays
- Communicating with the press
- Pitching the press/good press
- Reacting to bad press
- Social media and the press: Reporters live on Twitter
- Media training and preparing materials
• Press calendar/crafting plans and executing press events/media tours
• Creating “carry forward” from your events
• Message discipline & rapid response
• The art of the leak

Reading Due Today: Campaign Communication and Political Marketing, Chapter 8
Assignment(s) Due Today: None

**Week 7**
**PAID MEDIA AND APPLYING TACTIC TO A STRATEGY (CONROY)**

We will study how you can determine which media connects best with your coalition of voters, and how this fits within your budget.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

• Tactics vs. Strategy
• Understanding media lingo and currency
• Planned and buying media
  - TV
  - Mail
  - Digital
  - Radio
  - Other
• Building your media campaign

Reading Due Today: Brand Media Strategy (pp. 109-208)
Assignment(s) Due Today: None

**Week 8**
**CAMPAIGN TIMING AND TACTICS/NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNING (CONROY)**

We will study how optimizing the measured communications and contacts across paid, owned & earned channels with the goal of reducing waste of the resources within a campaign. Additionally, we will talk about negative campaigning – how, when and why to go negative, and what to do when you’re attacked.

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

• Define your campaign goals
• Message space and political culture and how this impacts communications
• Lock in on your objectives
• What are the variables you must overcome
• What is the game plan?
• Process + Tactics + Timing = Outcome
• Types of strategies and what work for your campaign
• The dos and don’ts around your communications rollout
• How to create the maximum amount of carry-forward to your initial campaign message
• How and when to enter the race
• Announcing a campaign
• Candidate rollout
• Communications efforts during inspection time (Pre and post-announcement)
• Introducing and driving a negative message
• Negative attacks and why voters secretly love them
• Negative attacks dos and don’ts
• What to do when your campaign is attacked
• The press and negative attacks
• Tools for going negative

Reading Due Today:  *Dirty Politics* (pp. 15-63) – posted on Blackboard
*The Political Brain* (pp. 317-347) – posted on Blackboard

Assignment(s) Due Today: Assignment #3

**Week 9**

**CLOSING OUT THE CAMPAIGN (KAPLAN)**

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:

• The pivotal moments that can make a difference
• Momentum and voter enthusiasm
• The endless loop of talking points, zingers, and one-liners
• Does scorn and sarcasm have a role in a campaign?
• Preparing for the shocking moments that can dramatically transform the race
• Making your closing argument

Reading Due Today: TBD
Assignment(s) Due Today: TBD
Week 10 (CONROY AND KAPLAN)

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed:
• Oral presentation from the student’s final project

Reading Due Today: None
Assignment(s) Due Today: Final Project written and oral presentation

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.