

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management
May 17 – July 23 | Summer 2016

Applied Political Communications
PMGT 6402, Section 10
3 Credits
1957 E STREET, Room 212

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructors

FIONA CONROY
JONATHAN E. KAPLAN

Contact Information

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

Fiona Conroy 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), Gov. Tom Wolf (D-Penn.), and congressional and state legislative candidates across the country.

In addition to her strategic communications and direct mail work, Fiona has extensive campaign management experience. In 2015, she managed the independent expenditure that helped Democrats sweep all three open Pennsylvania Supreme Court seats. In 2012, she managed U.S. Senator Joe Manchin's successful re-election campaign in West Virginia. Fiona 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.

Fiona received an MA in Political Management and degree BA in History, both from The George Washington University.

Fiona is the Vice President of Programs for The George Washington University Alumni Association Board of Directors. She has served on the GWAA Board since 2009.

JONATHAN KAPLAN

Phone Number: (917) 583-1955

Email Address: JONATHANEKAPLAN@GMAIL.COM

Jonathan E. Kaplan is the communications officer at the Open Society Foundations in Washington, D.C. He works closely with the staff to develop and implement communications and advocacy strategies on Open Society's behalf.

Since 1996, Jonathan has worked in the Obama administration, a journalist, and a congressional aide. 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 and the Washington, D.C., correspondent for the *Portland Press Herald-Maine Sunday Telegram*. His writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy.com*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

He received his BA from Colby College and an MA in Public Policy from the University of Chicago. He lives in Washington with his wife and three-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 plan to be available each week for an hour prior to class. If work schedules make this impossible, we can arrange an alternate time.

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 <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>.

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: <https://disabilitysupport.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 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 attendance and participation grade. Your attendance and participation grade is not based on attendance alone. We expect you to be fully engaged in class discussions and to take part in in-class exercises.

Late Assignment Policy

Assignments are due before class starts at 7:10 p.m. on Tuesday. Assignments received after 7:10 p.m. will be considered one day late. Assignments received after 7:10 p.m. will be immediately reduced by one full letter grade (A to a B, e.g.). For each additional day an assignment is late, it will be reduced by one letter grade. Any assignment that is turned in more than three calendar days after it is due will be worth zero (0) points.

Extra Credit Policy

There will be no extra credit offered in this course.

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

Beatriz Cuartas
Assistant Program Director, Political Management Program
beatrizcuartas@gwu.edu
202-994-5512

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, target, persuade, and influence voters, constituents, lawmakers, or any other group, are key ingredients to winning.

Successful political and issue advocacy campaigns reach the right people with the right messages. The people managing those campaigns develop messaging, create the means on how to communicate those messages, and choose the right person to deliver those messages. The campaigns know which groups they need to persuade, they find them, influence them, and hopefully mobilize them to take action.

This course is designed for GSPM students to explore 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, analyze advocacy campaigns, and study the current election 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.
3. Adapt political communications to respond to events, while continuing to align and reinforce longer term goals and strategies.
4. Clean, clear, mistake-free writing to get your point across whether it's inside a campaign or public messaging.
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 the news. We will begin class by discussing the previous week's political and policy news. You will be asked to share something you read that week that you feel was either interesting, perplexing, or beneficial to your understanding of political campaigns and campaign rhetoric, tactics, and the use of images. You will be asked to evaluate events and discuss their impact on electoral politics and policy issues.

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Assignment 1: EFFECTIVE WRITING EXERCISE	This assignment will test your knowledge of what makes for good grammar, compelling sentence structure and organization, and powerful arguments.	WEEK 2 (5/24)	15
Assignment 2: STORYTELLING EXERCISE	How to tell the same narrative to different audiences using different tools and techniques.	WEEK 4 (6/7)	15
Assignment 3: CANDIDATE BRIEFING MEMO	How to assess the media environment, advise a candidate, and predict what questions reporters will ask.	WEEK 7 (6/28)	15
NEWS QUIZZES	Occasional pop quizzes to assess whether you are reading news about politics.	Ongoing	10
FINAL PROJECT: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN	Design a communications plan for a political or issue campaign, and adapt that strategy.	WEEK 9 (7/12)	25
FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATION	Presentation of final project.	WEEK 10 (7/19)	10
CLASS ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION	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.	Ongoing	10
TOTAL			=100

We will be grading in whole or half-points (for example, you could earn a 15 or a 14.5). Again, no extra credit points will be offered.

Assignments submitted late will be reduced by one full letter grade per day, for up to three days (assignments that are submitted after class has started on the day it is due = minus one letter grade; assignments submitted the day after it was due = minus two letter grades; assignment submitted two days after it was due = minus three letter grades; assignment submitted three days after it was due = zero (0) points). Please refer to the Late Assignment Policy on page 3.

Your Attendance/Participation grade is not based on attendance alone. Please refer to the Attendance Policy on page 3.

The grade scale for all GSPM classes is below:

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.

Required Text and Learning Materials to Purchase

Brand Media Strategy, Integrated Communications Planning in the Digital Era by Antony Young

The Speechwriter: A Brief Education in Politics by Barton Swaim

Act of Congress: How America’s Essential Institution Works, and How It Doesn’t by Robert Kaiser

PLEASE NOTE: Additional Required Texts Will Be Posted on Blackboard

Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials

Jonathan’s recommended readings (not required): What It Takes, Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics; The Boys on the Bus; and 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

Recommended writing resources (these are not required reading): The Elements of Style, Fourth Edition 4th Edition; The Associated Press Stylebook; American Heritage Dictionary

CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

WEEK 1, May 17:

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

- Introduction
- Overview of the course, books, and outside readings
- In-class expectations and assignments
 - We want to be clear: We will be grading in whole points and half-points. For example, if an assignment is worth 15 points, you could earn 13.5 or 14.
 - There will be no extra credit.
 - Late assignments will be docked one letter grade per day late. Any assignment submitted after the start of class (7:10PM) will be considered one day late.
 - You must write well. We expect work where the writing is coherent, logical, and without grammatical errors and typos.
 - We expect you to read the newspaper, either the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Politico*, and other political-oriented news outlets (*Wall Street Journal*, NPR, etc).
 - Since this is a class about communicating with the media and policymakers, we expect that you will actively follow Twitter, although there's no requirement that you Tweet. But we want you to be where the audience is.
- 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?

Reading Due Today: Act of Congress, Preface plus Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

WEEK 2, May 17:

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

How branding works with consumers, and voters alike.

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

Who is your candidate? Who is your audience?

- 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?

What is your candidate or organization's brand?

- 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
- Hispanic 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, May 31:

ELEMENTS OF YOUR COMMUNICATION PLAN & BUILDING YOUR COMMUNICATION MODEL (KAPLAN)

In this class, we will review the building blocks of a communications plan.

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

- What's a message?
- What's a message grid?
- Communication well is no substitute for poor policy
- What are, who are, and can you cultivate and leverage "super friends"/"validators"?
- Developing an editorial calendar
- What's at the heart of a communications plan? A goal.
- In class exercise

Reading Due Today: The Speechwriter, Chapters 1-9, especially Chapter 3

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

WEEK 4, June 7:

MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND CONTENT DELIVERY (KAPLAN)

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

- What is the communications ecosystem?
 - How are we consuming media and what does the media landscape look like today?
 - Where are we getting our news?
 - Content is King: What are some elements of powerful content?
 - Using your content for maximum impact.
 - To whom and where to pitch stories?
 - When to give a reporter an exclusive?
 - Syncing the content with the distribution channels.
 - Lessons on writing well

Reading Due Today: The Speechwriter (finish the book)
Act of Congress, Chapters 8, 9, and 10

Assignment(s) Due Today: Assignment #2

WEEK 5, June 14:

YOU'RE IN THE CONTENT BUSINESS (CONROY)

Paid, Earned and Owned Communications

Whether a political campaign or an organization running an issue based campaigns, 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: 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 6, June 21:**THE PRESS & COMMUNICATIONS (KAPLAN)**

Every aspect of the news industry is under enormous strain. News organizations continue to face severe financial pressure (although, given the rise of Donald Trump, some have experienced a temporary wave of good fortune) Publishers demand more of editors. Editors demand more of reporters, who are asked to report more stories, faster than ever, better than everyone else, across print, digital, video, and social media channels. So 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-racking. 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
- How a journalist sees the world
- Why (good) writing matters
- Is anything off-the-record??
- How to pitch a story?
- 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
- 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 / handing out exclusives

Reading Due Today: Act of Congress, Chapters to be assigned

Assignment(s) Due Today: None

WEEK 7, June 28:

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: Assignment #3

WEEK 8, July 5:

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

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

- 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: None

WEEK 9, July 12:

CLOSING OUT THE CAMPAIGN (KAPLAN)

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

- The pivotal moments, which 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?
 - Does humor have a role?
 - Kill them with kindness?
- Preparing for the shocking moments, which can dramatically transform the race.
 - Can you ever be prepared?
- Making your closing argument.
 - Political campaigns end; some advocacy campaigns do not.

Reading Due Today: Act of Congress, Chapter 22 + Epilogue

Assignment(s) Due Today: Written Final Project

WEEK 10, July 19:

FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS (CONROY AND KAPLAN)

Topic and Content Covered & Learning Objective(s) Addressed: Oral presentation from the student's final project (3 minute limit, Power Point, 5 slides only).

Reading Due Today: TBD

Assignment(s) Due Today: Oral Presentation of Final Project

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.