

George Washington University
Graduate School of Political Management
Course 246.10 "Political Communication Strategy"
Tuesday, 6:10-8:45pm, MPA Room 305

Instructor: Cheri Jacobus
202/257-4638 (cell)
CheriJacobus@aol.com

Course Description

The course will examine political communication strategy, how it is developed and how it is integrated into the overall political and issue campaign.

The practical focus will be on political campaigns with a candidate, as well as issue/policy campaigns designed to forward a policy agenda in a legislative body.

Components include, but are not limited to:

- The role of research in devising messages and communications strategy
- Developing a message and communications plan
- How communication drives policy
- Message and communications delivery systems (media, speeches, testimony, image/staging, press releases and other written material)
- Coordinating and integrating paid and earned media
- New media – internet, blogs, YouTube
- Dealing with reporters and managing the 24-hour news cycle

Assignments and Grading Policy

This course will have a strong emphasis on class participation and practical application of communication strategies in class workshops and written assignments. Attendance is mandatory, as some of the course work will be in-class breakout sessions and presentations. Expert guest speakers will be included in the schedule.

Grades will be determined on a 100 point scale, 90 to 100 an A, 80 to 89 a B, 70 to 79 a C, etc.

- Writing Assignments: 45 points – Three writing assignments will be required, with each worth 15 points towards the final grade

- Class participation, discussion and in-class breakout team strategy sessions and presentations: 20 points (2 points possible for each of the 10 classes)
- Final writing assignment and presentation: 35 points (instructions for final paper will be issued early to mid-course)

The final project will be a written communications plan for a presidential campaign or a major legislative issue, including an outline and in-class presentation (5 minutes per student)

Your communications plan will be for the name in bold, with the designated opponent. The communication strategies must be tailored to reflect the opponent, as well as your candidate or group.

McCain v Clinton or Obama – overall communications strategy plus detailed plan for:

- **senior vote**
- **women’s vote**
- **Youth vote**
- **African American vote**
- **Hispanic vote**
- **Independent vote**
- **Crossover Democratic vote**
- **Rustbelt vote**
- **Christian conservative turnout**

Clinton or Obama v McCain – overall communications strategy plus detailed plan for:

- **senior vote**
- **women’s vote (if Obama is nominee only)**
- **southern white male vote**
- **African American vote (if Clinton is nominee only)**
- **Hispanic vote**
- **Independent vote**
- **Crossover Republican vote**
- **Rustbelt vote**
- **Christian and “values voters”**

Employee Free Choice Act – pro
Employee Free Choice Act – con
Fairness Doctrine – pro
Fairness Doctrine – con
Earmark Reform Act – pro
Earmark Reform Act - con

The final assignment will require communications strategy with detail, including geographic and demographic concerns (i.e. – what is my Southern strategy? The mid-west “flyover” Red State strategy? Coalition members strategy and message for issue campaigns). Greater detail will be required for the specified target groups. Submit your top three choices by e-mail to me by June 10. Where possible, you will be assigned your first choice, and if more students choose issues over a political campaign, additional choices for the final will be made available.

Reading assignments:

“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything” by Joe Trippi

“The Way To Win: Taking the White House in 2008” by Mark Halperin and John F. Harris

Course Schedule

May 20

Overview/Introduction:

Research and developing a political communications message and strategy

May 27

Creating a communications strategy for candidates

Strategies and tactics – integrating into an overall plan

Writing assignment #1 due June 3 – Develop a message and strategy for a candidate running for office (to be assigned in class)

June 3

Creating a communications strategy for a legislative issue campaign and tactics employed

Writing assignment #2 due June 10 – Develop a message and strategy with tactics for a policy/legislative effort.

June 10

Crisis management – turning the corner when the unexpected hits. Review case studies

Writing assignment due June 17 -- devise a strategy to deal with a crisis situation that arises in the campaign (case studies to be assigned in class)

June 17

Discussion of crisis papers.

Paid message delivery systems – TV, radio, internet and direct mail

Reading assignment #1 due June 24 -- “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, the Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything” by Joe Trippi

June 24

Earned media message delivery systems -- speeches, press releases, press conferences, House/Senate Floor remarks, committee hearings, etc.

Reading assignment #2 due July 01 -- “The Way To Win: Taking the White House in 2008” by Mark Halperin and John F. Harris

July 1

Meet the Press – Working with journalists: good bedside manner, conflicts, understanding their job and role in your communications strategy.

July 8

Targeting the message by philosophy, demographics, geography, etc.

Wrap-up, summary and review of course information

Assignment: Have first draft of final papers ready for July 15th class.

July 15

Review of first draft of papers – can review and discuss class materials relevant to the final papers.

July 22

Presentation of final and final papers due.