

PMGT 203, Fall 2008
Professor Michael Cornfield, with Kirsten Fedewa
Mondays, 7:10 - 9:40 p.m. – MPA Building, Room 305
corn@gwu.edu , kfedewa@fedewaconsulting.com

COMMUNICATIONS ELEMENTS

This course introduces GSPM students to the specialized forms of communication which political professionals use to win support for their candidates and causes. Students will learn how to produce strategically sound and rhetorically powerful messages for electoral, advocacy, educational, corporate, and crisis campaigning. Just as important, students will learn how to evaluate the messages of others with a critical eye.

Class sessions will mix mini-lectures on communication skills and relevant background knowledge with discussions of situations facing a mock omnibus public persuasion firm. Assignments will flow out of these situations, so it is important to attend class regularly.

Course Requirements

Students will write **six short papers** during the semester. Different students will write in different weeks. Each paper will count for 15% of the course grade, except the last paper, which will be slightly longer and count for 25%. In most cases, you will be asked to devise a campaign message in one form or another, and write a cover memo explaining the strategy behind its creation and for its public use. **Assignments must be submitted by noon on the day they are due.** Course work should be submitted via Blackboard or E-mailed to the appropriate professor. **Please make sure you have a copy of everything you submit for assignments.**

Remember always that unclear prose can foul up a campaign. We recommend that you keep a copy of ACTION GRAMMAR by Joanne Feierman at hand as you write for this course.

The professors reserve the right to raise a student's grade for improvement in assignment performance over the course of the semester, as well as for excellent class participation. Excellent class participation means, above all, making constructive comments. The professors also reserve the right to lower a student's grade for poor attendance and/or late submission of assignments. Cheating of any kind—including misrepresenting your own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information—will be dealt with harshly. Please refer to the GSPM Student Handbook and the GWU Student Guide to Rights and Responsibilities for more information on what constitutes proper and improper academic conduct. Finally, the professors reserve the right not to change a grade even after a paper has been revised, in the event a revision has been requested and submitted.

Outside of class meetings, the best way to communicate with us is by e-mail or via Blackboard. Office appointments are available by request.

Course Readings

Because this is a workshop style course, there are few traditional course readings. Assigned readings for class discussions will develop week by week in step with current events, class guests, and class activity. The better you keep up with assigned readings –and go beyond them—the better your class comments and, thereby, your course grade will be.

There are two books to get:

Daniel M. Shea and Michael John Burton, *Campaign Craft* (2nd edition). [“Craft”]
Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg, *Political Campaign Communication* (6th edition). [“PCC”]

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

In consulting the schedule below, please note that guest availability may lead to juggling a couple of sessions. Watch for shift announcements on Blackboard.

1. September 15 What is Strategy and Message Development?

Campaigning and Writing. Plan for the Course. Rhetorical Situations. The Process of Strategic Message Development. Action and Discussion Memos.

2. September 22 Research.

Types of Campaign Research. Research vs. Intelligence. Ethical and Practical Considerations.

READINGS: Craft, Chapters 1-5 and 7.

3. September 29 Election Campaigns and Debates.

Phases of an Electoral Campaign. Debates: “Defining Moments.” Attacks, Defenses, and the Moral High Ground.

READINGS: PCC, Chapters 1-3 and 8; Craft, Chapter 8

4. October 6 Visuals in Print, Television, and the Web.

The Power of Moving Pictures. Basics of Graphical Design and Storyboarding. Making Use of Popular Culture.

5. October 13 Press Relations and Media Buys.

Earned, Paid, and Social Media: an Overview. The Press as an Audience. Advisories, Releases, and Events. Buying Advertisements.

READINGS: PCC, Chapter 10; Craft, Chapters 10 and 11.

6. October 20 Asking for Money.

The Three Tiers of Fundraising. Online Fundraising. What Else to Ask Of and Do With Donors.

READINGS: PCC, Chapters 9 and 11.

7. October 27 Mobilizing Volunteers and Other Supporters.

Identifying, Targeting, and Micro-Targeting Constituencies. Fly-ins and Local Events. Control vs. Participation: The Recurrent Dilemma. GOTV.

8. November 3 Public Speaking.

Principles of Speech Writing and Performance. Client Pitches. Community Forums & Town Halls. Casual Settings. Election Settings.

READINGS: PCC, Chapters 6-7.

9. November 10 Corporate Campaigns and Reputation Management.

Phases of Advocacy and Corporate Campaigns. Monitoring Brand and Other Key Words. Crises and Rollouts. Organizational Challenges.

10. November 17 Argumentation: How to Make a Case.

Education Campaigns. Substantiating Claims. Op-Eds. Powerpoints. The Blogosphere.

11. November 24 Versioning Information.

The 3/30/3/30 Rule. Web Site Design and Promotion.

12. December 1 Data and Politics

The Use of Polls in Political Communication. Presenting Quantitative Information.

13. December 8 Campaigns and History.

Analogies and the Uses of History. Two Great American Campaigns. History as an Audience.