

# COM 486: Political Communication

Fall, 2007      MWF 3-3:50 p.m.      100 Draper

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## Course Rationale:

“I HATE POLITICS!” “I AM NOT A VERY POLITICAL PERSON.” – I have heard many of these comments over the past few years. As our government’s approval ratings drop, more and more citizens refuse to engage in the political sphere. I want this course first and foremost to show you how you can and should be engaged in the political process while rejecting the so-called “game” of politics. I want you to form opinions about policies and issues that directly affect your futures. It is time to end the apathy and start CARING!!

Operating on the premise that communication is at the root of all political praxis, this course allows you the opportunity to engage the political process and implement your understanding of political issues and media campaigns. Throughout the semester, we will discuss political communication concepts, how the media influence policy development, what issues are at the core of the 2008 Presidential election, and how speech writing is a vital tool for any viable candidate. You will get to know the 2008 Presidential candidates quite intimately over the course of the semester; your research on their policy stances will be vital for making an informed choice in '08. The primary goal for this class is for you to recognize how media and politics intersect to influence the masses.

## Course Objectives:

1. Understand Political Communication as a discreet context of Communication.
2. Learn the role that political messages play in the public's understanding of politics.
3. Learn the role that political messages play in motivating the public to vote.
4. Survey the types of Media involved in political communication.
5. Understand the organizational structures of the media involved. Analyze the intersection of Agenda Setting theory and how the Media set political messages.
6. Making an argument about contemporary political issues through a formal research paper.
7. Develop oral argumentation skills as well as hone your persuasive skills.
8. **To become an informed and engaged citizen who cares about issues that affect our world.**

## Service Learning Component:

Partnering with the League of Women Voters, we will be exploring, in depth, the issue of immigration reform in the United States. Ms. Elizabeth Crowe of LWV and I have three tasks for the service learning component of the course:

1. In small groups, you will work on creating display materials on immigration that will be setup in several community locations. These materials will include 3 poster designs, 1 fact vs. myth sheet, a PowerPoint presentation that can be shown on a continuous loop. To gather the necessary materials, we will work with HOP and KFTC (and others). This task will be completed by September 17<sup>th</sup>.
2. On the evening of September 25<sup>th</sup>, those who do not have scheduled conflicts will participate in a community forum on immigration in Richmond. We will take our display materials and help shuttle interested students to the site.
3. Lastly, we will help host our own immigration forum here in Berea on either the evening of October 23<sup>rd</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup>. We'll offer a semi-formal debate about proposed immigration legislation and then follow-up with a community forum. You will be responsible for the logistics of the event, not the debate.

## **2007 Election and Looking toward 2008:**

Also, given the upcoming elections, we will work with voter registration and issue awareness during the week of September 17-21. Working with other campus groups like SGA, HOP, GSA, and SENS, our charge is to design a plan of registration tables at various locations across campus during peak rush hours (lunch and dinner). We will register potential voters as well as have issue displays. Based on schedules, you will divide into groups and coordinate your plan (display design, information contacts, workforce, etc.) for your particular issue:

Monday, September 17<sup>th</sup> – Immigration (HOP)

Wednesday, September 19<sup>th</sup> – Gay and Lesbian Partnership Benefits (GSA)

Friday, September 21<sup>st</sup> – Environmental Issues (SENS)

### **Required Text:**

Powell, Larry and Cowart, Joseph. *Political Campaign Communication: Inside and Out*. Boston Allyn and Bacon, 2003

*It is your responsibility to acquire the text and read it. We may not have time in class to discuss all reading assignments. Please ask during class or my office hours if you have questions about the readings. YOU WILL BE QUIZZED OVER EACH ASSIGNED READING.*

### **Class Policies:**

**Student Needs:** If you have special needs (such as a learning disability) that I should be aware of, or if you expect to miss classes because of team trips or other reasons, please inform me after class or by email. If you find that you're confused or troubled about the class, contact me.

**Attendance Policy:** I expect you to be in class each day. **There will be a 2 % deduction of your final grade for EACH absence beyond THREE, for any reason.** For ANY day you miss, you will be allowed to make up work **only if** the absence is **officially excused** by me (based on evidence such as a letter for any official college activity, notice from student health or letter from physician, etc). Should you be absent on your assigned group day, you will receive a grade of “NC” for that assignment.

**TARDIES:** Not only are you expected to be in class each day, but you need to be on time each day. Each tardy over three will also be deducted 2% from your overall grade.

**Class Atmosphere and Discussion:** Each class member is expected to participate actively in discussion. One very good way to prepare for class discussion is to bring any of the following to class with you: questions that occurred to you while reading (there is no such thing as a stupid question; if you're wondering about it, others are too). **This is a seminar course that will only function with your participation!!!**

Some silence is not automatically interpreted as non-participation; indeed no student should be speaking all of the time; on the other hand continued silence is cause for concern. NO MONOPOLIZING; THAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE “NEGATIVE PARTICIPATION.” Please monitor your comments for relevance and quality versus quantity.

**Also, please remember that disruptive behavior can encompass sleeping, and talking while others are talking. Turn off all cell phones and anything else that will make a noise during class. NO LAPTOPS UNLESS YOU ARE TOLD TO USE THEM!!**

### **ACADEMIC OFFENSES: PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING**

I expect that **all of your work in this class** (and in all of your other classes) will always be **your own**. It is best not to push me on this policy. At the least, I will fail you for the class and will set in motion proceedings to have you removed from Berea.

### **Grading Policies:**

<b>A</b>	An A grade signifies consistently outstanding achievement in the course.
<b>B</b>	A B grade reflects work of good to very good quality. Work at this level often has outstanding characteristics but is not consistent throughout the course.
<b>C</b>	A C denotes that the student has attained an acceptable level of competence. The student has demonstrated a basic understanding of the course material and abilities sufficient to proceed to more advanced courses in the area.
<b>D</b>	D work is minimally adequate. A "D" raises serious concern about the readiness of a student to continue in related course work.
<b>F</b>	F work is unsatisfactory and unworthy of credit.

### **Quality of Work:**

**Complete all assigned readings and assignments *before* each class meeting. You will be quizzed!!**

Papers, oral assignments, and examinations are graded on their quality of presentation and the level of displayed knowledge. Doing what is required on any assignment is considered "average work"; therefore, students who wish to receive above average scores will "go the extra mile" in their work. Excellent work will analyze texts beyond the surface level and provide insightful ideas and examples. Students should proofread and present quality work in this course.

**Papers are to be typed, double-spaced, with Times New Roman, 12 pt. font size and one-inch margins. Cited using APA.**

### **Course Requirements & Grading Scale:**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Self Bio on Political Views	5%
Immigration Display for LWV	10%
Voter Registration Week	5%
Candidate Bio Analysis	10%
Stump Speech	5%
Party Debates (Candidates)	5%
Candidate Press Conference	5%
Team Debates on Issues	9%
Quizzes (8)	16% (2% each)
MIDTERM EXAM (100 points)	10%
FINAL EXAM (100 points)	10%
Policy Paper	10%

### **Assignments:**

1. Self Bio: Write a comprehensive answer to these questions:

1. Do you consider yourself political? Why/why not? (What drives you to be or keeps you away from politics?)
2. Do you vote? Why or why not?
3. What party do you claim as your own? Why/why not?
4. Do you consider yourself liberal, conservative or neither? – explain your choice. Also, in your answer, please write a full description of what you think each of these terms means.

2. LWV Immigration Displays: Using questions provided that the League wants help in answering, you will work in small groups to create display materials on immigration that will be setup in several community locations. These materials will include 3 poster designs, 1 fact vs. myth sheet, a PowerPoint presentation that can be shown on a continuous loop. To gather the necessary materials, we will work with HOP and KFTC (and others). This task must be completed by September 17<sup>th</sup>.

3. Voter Registration Drive: Working with other campus groups like SGA, HOP, GSA, and SENS, your charge is to design a plan of registration tables at various locations across campus during peak rush hours (lunch and dinner). We will register potential voters as well as have issue displays. Based on schedules, you will divide into groups and coordinate your plan (display design, information contacts, workforce, etc.) for your particular issue:

Monday, September 17<sup>th</sup> – Immigration (HOP)

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#### 4. Candidate Bio:

In a complete sentence outline format, you are required to research the following categories about your assigned candidate. Please make sure to provide complete bibliographic information for all facts. Billy will make copies of these for each student as well as for the LWV. Provide footnotes and citations throughout. The categories are:

- a. age, family, full name, education, employment history
- b. party affiliation and past political experience (offices held)
- c. policy positions (immigration, healthcare, Iraq, education, gay marriage, abortion, stem cell research, environment, etc.)
- d. place in which the candidate formally declared his/her candidacy
- e. issues mentioned in his/her entry speech
- f. stump speech summary
- g. list of TV advertisements and where run (include summary)
- h. overview the campaign's finances and fundraising to date
- i. track the changes in his/her physical appearance over time (has the image changed?)

5. Stump Speech: Using the candidate from your bio, you will write and deliver a 5-7 minute speech overviewing your candidate's campaign goals. This is a formal speech; dress accordingly.

6. Party Debate: Again, as your candidates, you will participate in a party debate similar to CNN's YouTube debate. All candidates from your respective party will participate, and I will moderate. Questions will come from outside sources. These will be formal debates; so dress accordingly.

7. Candidate Press Conference: You will act as the press secretary for your respective candidate. This scenario will place your candidate in some sort of scandalous position. You are required to give brief opening remarks and field questions for five minutes from the press (the class).

8. Team Debate: Lastly, you will engage in a formal team debate on a given contemporary political issue. This will be a formal research-driven debate.

9. Quizzes: There will be eight short quizzes over the readings. Quizzes will be multiple choice and/or short answer in nature AND WILL BE TIMED (10 minutes max).

\*\*\*EACH STUDENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO KEEP UP WITH CURRENT EVENTS; AT LEAST ONE QUESTION ON EACH QUIZ WILL RELATE TO A MAJOR, RELEVANT CURRENT EVENT IN THE WORLD. I RECOMMEND YOU LOOK AT THE NEWSPAPERS IN THE LIBRARY OR USE YOUR LAPTOPS AND VISIT CNN.COM, NETSCAPE.COM, NEW YORK TIMES.COM, ETC. TO KEEP CURRENT.\*\*\*

10. Midterm Exam: The midterm will be a short-answer format.

11. Final Exam: Comprehensive; same format as midterm.

12. Policy Paper: Using a contemporary issue that concerns and interests you, you will write an argumentative position paper on that issue and propose some sort of solution to the underlying problem. This will be a formal research paper, 8-10 pp. with proper APA citations. Possible research areas include:

- Immigration
- Healthcare
- Education
- Social Security
- Gay Marriage
- Affirmative Action
- Prison Reform
- Abortion
- Stem Cell Research
- Environmental Reform
- The Homeless
- Religion in Politics

## **TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE (changes are a possibility)**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading/Assignments</u>
W Aug 29	Syllabus; audience questionnaire
F Aug 31	Discuss self bio assignment and audience analysis results; plan the voter registration groups
M Sept 3	<b>Self Bio Due</b> ; discuss LWV immigration displays; break into groups for LWV; start talking about immigration legislation
W Sept 5	Chapter 1 & <b>Quiz 1</b>
F Sept 7	Political Parties – what are they?
M Sept 10	2008 – who is involved? Discuss candidate bio assignment and choose candidates for assignment/
W Sept 12	Chapter 2 & <b>Quiz 2</b>
F Sept 14	Chapter 4 & <b>Quiz 3</b>
M Sept 17	<b>Immigration materials due for LWV;</b> Chapter 9 & <b>Quiz 4;</b> <b>REGISTRATION DRIVE DAY: Immigration</b>
W Sept 19	Discuss the Stump Speech assignment and assign speaking days; <b>REGISTRATION DRIVE DAY: GSA Group</b>

F Sept 21	NO FORMAL CLASS: BILLY AT DEBATE; <b>REGISTRATION DRIVE DAY: Environment</b>
M Sept 24	<b>Candidate Bios Due</b> ; Discuss the internet & politics
<i>Tuesday Sept 25<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Richmond forum on immigration</i>
W Sept 26	Chapter 5 & <b>Quiz 5</b>
F Sept 28	NO FORMAL CLASS: BILLY AT DEBATE
M Oct 1	<b>Stump Speeches (formal dress)</b>
W Oct 3	<b>Stump Speeches (formal dress)</b>
F Oct 5	<b>Stump Speeches (formal dress)</b>
M Oct 8	NO CLASS: READING PERIOD
W Oct 10	MIDTERM EXAM
F Oct 12	NO FORMAL CLASS: BERIA DEBATE (attend rounds for credit)
M Oct 15	<b>Stump Speeches (formal dress)</b> ; discuss party debate assignment & format
W Oct 17	NO CLASS: MOUNTAIN DAY
F Oct 19	NO FORMAL CLASS: BILLY AT DEBATE
M Oct 22	<b>Republican Party Debate(formal dress)</b>
W Oct 24	<b>Democratic Party Debate (formal dress)</b>
F Oct 26	Chapter 7 & <b>Quiz 6</b>
M Oct 29	view campaign ads and other media; discuss press conference format and give crisis scenarios; give order of press conferences
W Oct 31	Chapter 3 (Spin) & <b>Quiz 7</b>
F Nov 2	NO FORMAL CLASS: BILLY AT DEBATE
M Nov 5	<b>Press Conferences (formal dress)</b>
W Nov 7	<b>Press Conferences (formal dress)</b>
F Nov 9	NO FORMAL CLASS: BILLY AT DEBATE
M Nov 12	Chapters 12-13 & <b>Quiz 8</b>

W Nov 14	Role of the Personal for Candidates & Religion and Politics
F Nov 16	Discuss Team Debate; choose teams; assign topics and debating order
M Nov 19	Discuss final paper and demo an abridged debate
<b><i>HAPPY THANKSGIVING BREAK</i></b>	
M Nov 26	<b>debate 1</b>
W Nov 28	<b>debate 2</b>
F Nov 30	NO FORMAL CLASS: BILLY AT DEBATE
M Dec 3	<b>debate 3</b>
W Dec 5	<b>debate 4; course evals</b>

**December 10<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m. – FINAL EXAM & FINAL PAPER DUE**

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!**

