

PUR 4932

Political Communication

Spring 2021

W Period 7-9 (1:55 – 4:55), section 2E66

Instructor: Dr. Myiah Hutchens

Email: myiahhutchens@ufl.edu

Office: Weimer 3057

Office hours: Mondays 4-5p.m., or by appointment

Phone: 352-273-4163 (email is generally the fastest way to get a hold of me)

Required Texts

There are no required textbooks for this course. All materials (readings, videos, blog posts, etc.) will be made available to you via Canvas, organized by week. All readings need to be completed PRIOR to the class they are assigned in order to get the most out of our class time.

Course Goals

The political landscape is constantly evolving and the function communication plays in these shifts is essential. This class is designed to serve as an introduction to the role played by all forms of communication in contemporary American political communication. This course will play particular attention to how public relations professionals are integral in all of these processes. We will cover the functions of traditional and contemporary mediated channels, alternative media, and interpersonal discussion. How to understand and assess audiences will also be addressed.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Explain how politicians, advocacy groups, and citizens use strategic or persuasive communication to achieve their goals
- Develop persuasive, evidence-based arguments about the role of various communication channels, appropriate messaging strategies for each, and their implications for public discourse and engagement
- Apply theories and concepts from research in communication, media studies, and political public relations in order to develop a political strategy or media product
- Deliver a prepared group presentation in a natural, confident, and conversational manner

College of Journalism and Communications Objectives

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the US
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;

- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

Important Course Policies

Attendance: Our class is scheduled as a fully face-to-face course this spring, and we will meet in our classroom during class time. I expect that you attend class, and you will have the opportunity to gain points by completing in-class assignments, but I do not take formal attendance. I do post slides on Canvas, but recommend that if miss class you obtain notes from a classmate. **If you miss class please do not ask me if you missed “anything important.”** Of course you did! I think every day is important. If what you mean to ask is if I made any announcements about changes to due dates or something of that nature, those types of announcements will always be posted on the course website.

What happens if we have to switch to an online format at some point due to the COVID-19 pandemic? We will meet via Zoom during our scheduled class time, and I do expect that you are there and ready to participate, although as with regular class, formal attendance will not be taken. If a participation activity is done in class, and you are not present, those points cannot be made up for any reason. We will use our class time to go over activities, deal with course updates and questions, and most importantly you will have time to work with your group members which will have a large impact on your grade. Professionalism is important as a public relations student, and I expect a professional demeanor in our course Zooms (i.e., camera on, fully clothed, sitting up, in a quiet environment and/or using headphones, etc.). These course Zooms will not be recorded. Straight lecture material will be pre-recorded for you to view on your own schedule. As in all courses, **unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.**

Email Policy: As a state employee, my email is considered a public record, and can be requested via an open-records request. Because of this, federal privacy laws prevent me from discussing grades or other personal matters via email, and you must schedule an appointment with me to discuss these matters. In general, face-to-face (or Zoom-to-Zoom) meetings tend to take less time, and result in less confusion than emailed conversations. While you are welcome to email

me, I may indicate that you need an in-person meeting depending on the complexity of the issue. Also, please be aware that email is considered formal communication, and it is important to practice professionalism. Make sure that you do not treat email as text (i.e., don't use text abbreviations) and never email something that you would not say to your boss' face.

Late Work/Make-up Work: All written assignments must be turned in to Canvas by 11:59pm the day the assignment is due. Canvas will automatically mark assignments as late if they are uploaded even one second after 11:59pm. You have 24 hours after the due date to turn in your assignment on Canvas for a 10% grade reduction, after 24 hours no late work is accepted. It is your responsibility to make sure you properly uploaded your paper. There are no make-ups/late exceptions for exams or in-class activities, for any reason beyond university or religious excused absences. Please notify me as soon as possible if you will miss class or an assignment. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/

Professionalism: As PR students I expect you to maintain a high level of professionalism in all of our interactions. This includes being courteous and respectful to all members of the course. Being respectful includes making sure you are not distracting to others via your cell phone or computer usage, talking with others during lecture, or arriving or leaving late.

How You Get Points

Point Distribution

Exams	400 pts
Framing Assignment	100 pts
Strategy Assignment	100 pts
Group Presentation	50 pts
In-class/online activities	50 pts
TOTAL	700 pts

Letter grades will be calculated using this formula:

Letter	Course Points	Percentage	Grade Points
A	700-651	100-93	4.0
A-	650-630	92.9-90	3.7
B+	629-609	89.9-87	3.3
B	608-581	86.9-83	3
B-	580-560	82.9-80	2.7
C+	559-539	79.9-77	2.3
C	538-511	76.9-73	2
C-	510-490	72.9-70	1.7
D+	489-469	69.9-67	1.3
D	468-420	66.9-60	1
F	419-0	59.9-0	0

I don't round up. I will keep grades posted on Canvas - it is your responsibility to check it and make sure you know where you are at.

Overview of Course Components

I will be as fair and impartial as is humanly possible in the grading process. Each of you will be graded on the same basis. Because of this, no extra work or special assignments will be given. Normally, by the time I return your graded assignment, I have looked at each person's work at least several times and feel comfortable with the grade assigned to it. Grades are earned; they are not gifts, nor are they negotiated. Grades are awarded on the basis on the quality of the work performed, not the amount of time expended.

I will work my hardest to make this course enjoyable and interesting. However, some students struggle with the material. Please see me if you are having problems understanding the concepts covered in class. I am your resource for this class, see me in office hours or make an appointment if you can't come to office hours. I will do all I can to help you before a deadline. After a deadline has past, or an exam has been given, there is nothing I can do to help you.

Exams

Two unit exams will be given, in addition to the **OPTIONAL** final, which if taken would replace your lowest unit exam grade. All exams will be worth 200 points and will be administered online via Honorlock. Honorlock requires that you have a working webcam, and you must download the Chrome extension prior to the exam. There will be a practice exam posted to make sure you are comfortable with the program and requirements. You must be on time for exams. As soon as one person has completed their exam, no more exams can begin. No make-up exams are given regardless of the reason. If you do well on the two unit exams, and are satisfied with your grade, you can skip the final exam without consequence. If you miss an exam, or do poorly on an exam, you can take the final to replace the earlier exam grade that you may not be pleased with. The exams will cover the material in the readings and lectures – that includes everything posted online to Canvas. The unit exams will not be intentionally cumulative, but some content will utilize concepts from previous weeks. I will try to point these instances out when covering the material in lecture. The final exam will be cumulative, covering the whole semester and must be taken during the scheduled final exam period. The tests will be multiple choice/true-false/matching/short essay.

Written Assignments

You will have two written assignments that are designed to a) give you increased exposure to important issues regarding political communication, b) allow you to think about key issues covered in class, and c) help you apply those key issues to the real world. Brief details are below:

Framing Assignment: You will examine a specific political issue or current political event to examine for media framing. You cannot pick “the election”. If you want to analyze something related to the election, you need to choose a specific event in the election that has occurred or a specific political issue in the context of the election. Otherwise, you should pick a political issue that has recently been in the news (i.e., it doesn't have to be in the context of the election). You

will examine how the issue has been framed in at least 3 different media outlets and discuss why the various framing strategies were used.

Strategy Assignment: For this assignment, you will write a 1,500-word essay, in which you develop a strategic plan describing how a political candidate, elected official, political organization, or advocacy group can use course concepts to achieve its goals. Your strategy should be informed by class concepts, and you must choose an actual individual/group/cause and propose a strategy with a communication/action plan that is realistic and appropriate given its existing objectives and challenges.

Course Presentation

Working in a group of 4 students, you will develop a 15 minute in-class presentation (using PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) that critically analyzes a political “text.” You will describe the strategic messaging being used and take a position as to why it may or may not be effective. This text can be a television program, an individual episode or set of episodes from a television program, a film, an online video or video campaign, a print publication, a web site, a podcast, an event or protest, etc. You may choose to focus on any example of political communication, past or present, that is of interest to your group. You may expand on an example we covered in class, or you may choose something that we have not covered. Your presentation should offer a point of view regarding the significance of the example being studied and what it communicates about politics, targeted messaging and effective use of persuasive techniques.

In-class/Online Assignments

I believe, and research has shown, that active participation in learning is crucial for long term learning. Most weeks we will complete some sort of activity designed to help you understand the course material. These assignments – which could include content quizzes – will together make up 5% of your grade. Your top 10 weekly scores will count, which will provide you with a cushion if you need to miss a class.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Due
1 1/13	Course Intro Why Political Communication Matters	
2 1/20	Persuasion Theories	
3 1/27	Using Framing and Agenda Setting	
4 2/3	Targeted Messaging	
5 2/10	Crafting Messages and Going Negative/Debates and Image Cultivation	
6 2/17	Exam 1	Exam 1
7 2/24	Importance of Public Opinion	Framing assignment due
8 3/3	Assessing Your Audience/Interpersonal Diffusion	
9 3/10	Effective Use of Social Media	
10 3/17	Entertainment Media and Politics	
11 3/24	RECHARGE DAY- NO CLASS	
12 3/31	Government Relations and Lobbying	Strategy assignment due
13 4/7	Exam 2	Exam 2
14 4/14	Presentation prep	
15 4/21	Presentations	Presentation
16 Thursday 4/29	Final Exam Thursday, 4/29 10:00 – 12:00	Final

*Please note this schedule is tentative. Any changes will be discussed in class and posted to Canvas

Standard UF Policy Information and Links

UF Grading Policy

<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades> (Links to an external site.)

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals> (Links to an external site.). Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/> (Links to an external site.).

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html> (Links to an external site.)

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc> ([Links to an external site.](#)), and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> ([Links to an external site.](#)). Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Student Complaints

Campus: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf ([Links to an external site.](#)).

On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process> ([Links to an external site.](#)).

COVID Policies

We will have face-to-face instructional sessions to accomplish the student learning objectives of this course. In response to COVID-19, the following policies and requirements are in place to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions.

- You are required to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings. Following and enforcing these policies and requirements are all of our responsibility. Failure to do so will lead to a report to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
- This course has been assigned a physical classroom with enough capacity to maintain physical distancing (6 feet between individuals) requirements. Please utilize designated seats and maintain appropriate spacing between students. Please do not move desks or stations.
- Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
- Follow your instructor's guidance on how to enter and exit the classroom. Practice physical distancing to the extent possible when entering and exiting the classroom.
- If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms ([Click here for guidance from the CDC on symptoms of coronavirus](#)), please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class. [Click here for UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms](#).
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. [Find more information in the university attendance policies](#).