

PUR4480: Political Communication (25908-4480)

Spring 2024

Thursdays from 9:35 a.m. to 12:35 p.m. (Period 3-5)

Weimer 1078

Instructor: Eliana DuBosar

Office: Weimer 2039-D

Office Hours: Thursdays from 1 to 3 p.m. (or by appointment)

E-mail: eliana.dubosar@ufl.edu

Office Phone Number: 846-1155 (email is the fastest way to reach me)

Course Description and Goals:

The political landscape is constantly evolving and the role of communication in these shifts is essential. This class is designed to serve as an introduction to the role played by all facets of communication in contemporary American political communication. This course will pay particular attention to how public relations practitioners are integral to these processes. We will cover the functions of traditional and contemporary mediated channels, alternative media, and interpersonal discussions. We will also address how to understand and assess audiences.

Required Text:

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 must be completed PRIOR to the class for which they are assigned in order to get the most out of our class time.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this semester, 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 concept from research in communication, media studies, and political public relations in order to develop a political strategy or media product
- Deliver a well-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:

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located;

- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts;
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work

Final Grade Breakdown:

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Assignment:	Points (Percentage of Final Grade):
Exams	500 points
Framing Assignment	100 points
Strategy Assignment	100 points
Election Assignment	100 points
Group Presentation	100 points
In-class/online activities	50 points
Participation and Attendance	50 points
TOTAL	1000 points

Letter grades will be calculated as follows:

Letter	Course Points	Percentage	GPA Points
A	930-1000	93-100%	4.0
A-	900-929	90-92.9%	3.67
B+	870-899	87-89.9%	3.33
B	830-869	83-86.9%	3.0
B-	800-829	80-82.9%	2.67
C+	770-799	77-79.9%	2.33
C	730-769	73-76.9%	2.0
C-	700-729	70-72.9%	1.67
D+	670-699	67-69.9%	1.33

D	600-669	60-66.9%	1.0
F	0-599	0-59.9%	0

Course Policies:

Attendance:

I expect that you attend class, and you will have the opportunity to gain points by completing in-class activities and participating in class discussion. I do not provide any notes so if you miss a class, reach out to a classmate for any notes they may have taken. If you miss class, please do not ask me if you missed “anything important.” Of course, you did! **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.

E-mail 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 e-mail, and you must visit me in my office to discuss these matters. In general, face-to-face meetings tend to take less time and result in less confusion than emailed conversations. Also, please be aware that e-mail 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 e-mail something that you would not say to your boss’ face. If I don’t respond within 24 hours during the week, send a follow-up email.

Late/Make-up Work:

All written assignments must be submitted via Canvas by **11:59 p.m. on the due date listed both online and in the syllabus.** Assignments are automatically marked late by Canvas if they’re turned in even one minute after the deadline. You will have 24 hours after the due date to turn in your assignment for a 10% grade reduction. Any assignments received more than 24 hours after the due date will be given a zero. There are no make-ups/late exceptions for exams or in-class activities for any reason beyond university or religious excused absences.

Classroom Behavior:

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 everyone in the classroom. This includes making sure you are not being distracting to others in the class by using your cell phones, computers for non-class related things (e.g. social media, work for other courses), talking during lectures, or arriving late/leaving early.

Overview of Course Components:

I will be as fair and impartial as possible during the grading process. Each of you will be graded on the same basis. Normally by the time I’ve returned your assignments, I’ve looked

at everyone's work closely and feel comfortable with the grade assigned to it. Grades are earned; they are not gifts or negotiated and are awarded based on the quality of work not on the amount of time you spent working on an assignment.

I will do my best to make this course enjoyable and interesting. However, some students struggle with the material. Please see me if you are having trouble understanding any of the concepts we cover in class. I am here to help you succeed and am available during office hours or by appointment if you are unable to make it during office hours. I will do everything I can to help you before a deadline but once that deadline passes or an exam has been given, there's nothing I can do to help you.

Exams:

There will be two unit exams over the course of the semester, in addition to the **OPTIONAL** final exam, which would replace your lowest unit exam grade if you opt to take it. The first exam will cover what we learn during the first half of the semester and the second exam will cover what we learn during the second half of the semester. Exams will be 250 points each, closed book, and administered during our scheduled meeting time. They will cover content we go over during class lectures as well as the readings posted on 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. The final exam will be cumulative, covering the whole semester, and will be taken during the scheduled final exam period. **There will be no make-up exams. Once the first person has finished their exam, no more exams can begin. If you miss a unit exam, you can take the final exam to replace that zero.**

Written Assignments:

You will have three 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 for each assignment can be found 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 been in the news recently (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.

Election Assignment:

This semester, you have a unique opportunity as students taking Political Communication during an election period. Over the course of this semester, you will see a number of strategies used by candidates to mobilize voters during the primary elections, especially on social media. For this assignment, you should choose a candidate and focus on their use of social media for their campaigns. You can choose a single platform (either X, Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube) or look at tactics and engagement across multiple platforms. What was their most popular and least popular post? How did they implement or ignore some of the strategies we've talked about this semester? After answering key questions about the elements of their social media campaign, add how you would improve upon it if you were a member of the candidate's social media team. Would this vary based on the demographic you were attempting to target? This assignment should be 500-1000 words.

Group Presentation:

Working in a group of 4 students, you will develop a 15 minute in-class presentation (using Canva, PowerPoint, Google Slides, 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 Activities:

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.

Tentative Weekly Schedule*:

Week/Date	Topic and Assignment Due Dates	Due
Week 1 1/11	Course Introduction Why Political Communication Matters	
Week 2 1/18	Persuasion Theories	
Week 3 1/25	Using Framing and Agenda Setting	
Week 4 2/1	Targeted Messaging	
Week 5 2/8	Crafting Messages and Going Negative	
Week 6 2/15	Debates and Image Cultivation	
Week 7 2/22	Exam 1	Exam 1
Week 8 2/29	Importance of Public Opinion	Framing Assignment Due
Week 9 3/7	Assessing Your Audience/Interpersonal Diffusion	
Week 10 3/14	NO CLASS – Enjoy your spring break!	
Week 11 3/21	Effective Use of Social Media	
Week 12 3/28	Entertainment Media and Politics	
Week 13 4/4	Government Relations and Lobbying	Strategy Assignment Due
Week 14 4/11	Exam 2	Exam 2
Week 15 4/18	Group Presentations	Presentations Election Assignment Due
Week 16 4/25	NO CLASS – Reading day	
Finals Week 5/2	Final Exam Thursday 5/2 5:30-7:30 p.m.	Final via Canvas with Honorlock

*Schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be discussed in class and sent out via e-mail/Canvas announcement.

University of Florida Policies and Campus Resources

Attendance and Absence Policy:

The University of Florida's attendance and absence policies can be found [here](#).

Grading Policy:

The University of Florida's grades and grading policies can be found [here](#).

Students Requiring Accommodations:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. Click [here](#) to get started with the Disability Resource Center. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluer.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.

University Honesty Policy:

The university's honesty policy regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc. Suggested wording: 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 specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Click [here](#) to read the Honor Code. 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 for 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. More information can be found [here](#).

In-Class Recording Policy:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

HB7:

In this course, we will cover subjects that may be sensitive and/or challenging. As in all our courses, we do this not to indoctrinate but to instruct, to prepare you to be the most effective and successful media professional or scholar that you can be. We encourage you to understand all concepts presented in class, but we know that what you personally choose to believe is your business.

Health and Wellness Resources:

- **U Matter, We Care:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit the [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- **Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC):** Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center [website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

- **Student Health Care Center:** Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need or visit the Student Health Care Center [website](#).
- **University Police Department:** Visit the UF Police Department [website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 911 for emergencies).
- **UF Health Shands Emergency Room/Trauma Center:** For immediate medical care, call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center [website](#).

Academic Resources:

- **E-Learning Technical Support:** Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- **Career Connections Center (CCC):** Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- **Library Support:** Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- **Teaching Center:** Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment call 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- **Writing Studio:** 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- **Student Complaints (On-Campus):** Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code [webpage](#) for more information.
- **Online Student Complaints:** View the Distance Learning Student [Complaint Process](#).