

**POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
COMMUNICATION 4814
AU 2018**

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 10-11 a.m., and by appointment.

Classroom: Room 106 Journalism
11:30 a.m. to 12:25 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays
3 credits

Course Description:

This course deals with communication of a political nature, in and between elections. Political communication occurs in many levels of society, and through many forms of media and grassroots social movement organizations, nonprofits, as well as corporations, special interest groups, SuperPacs and other types of organizations. All of these types of organizations work at structuring public issues. Other sources of influence include interpersonal conversations among friends and family, but also mass communication, and social media. We will study political communication through a series of case studies that highlight various political communication strategies, public opinion and policy changes.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Understand some important theoretical issues that affect political communication among populations in today's media environment.
- 2) Become sensitive to practical considerations in dealing with the information needs and barriers to successful communication with populations.
- 3) Appreciate the significant new political communication opportunities and anticipate the problems that can arise from the use of new forms of communication in the political arena.
- 4) Understand the details of the cases and be able to draw theoretical lessons from them that might be applied to other issues or problems.

Requirements:

Required readings:

There is no formal textbook for the class. Readings can be found on the web, at the OSU Libraries, or through the course web site at carmen.osu.edu. Videos are available through OSU Libraries or the ODEE's Secured Media Library at <https://drm.osu.edu/media/>.

Web site:

We will use Carmen for distributing and maintaining records and documents such as the syllabus, assignments announcements, handouts, grades and other useful web-links and materials. Access this from on or off campus by pointing to <https://carmen.osu.edu>. All papers should be turned in to the appropriate Carmen dropbox.

Exams:

We will have four quizzes, one midterm, and one final exam. These will be conducted online using Carmen's quiz function and will deal with the readings and lecture materials.

Quizzes will typically consist of five objective questions such as multiple choice or true/false items. I will make clear before each quiz exactly what material it will cover.

The midterm and final exams will be in two parts. One part will involve some objective questions and another will involve a short essay. The final exam will be due no later than at the time of the final exam, but can be turned in early. I will announce the specific material in class and in email notes of the material to be covered by each of these exams so that you can be well-prepared.

One-Page Papers. (3). Each of you will pick three week's readings and prepare short essays dealing with the themes contained in those readings or other materials, e.g. videos. Each paper should be around 500 words (about one page, single-spaced). You will sign up for due dates for the essays, and they should be uploaded to Canvas before the start of class for the week you are writing about. I want your reactions to the course materials – not the lectures or class discussions – so the idea is that you write these before hearing the lectures or classroom discussion.

In preparing the essay, first consider ALL the material that is assigned for the given week, that is, read any articles or chapters assigned, watch any films, etc., and think about a crosscutting theme that runs through these materials. In your essay, provide a concise description of the theme, and explain what you mean by it. Offer your reaction to the theme. It is very important to write absolutely accurate, factual information.

The best essays will articulate a point of view with respect to the materials and then use facts from the materials to support this argument. These papers should *not* be a summary of the main points. I am more interested in your reaction to the information. This might involve the usefulness of the information, the level of interest you have in it, anything that you found particularly surprising or disappointing, etc.

Note that although these essays are short, they should contain the elements of any well-written essay: A good, creative title, strong lead, and good introduction,

transitions and conclusion. A specific grading rubric will be placed on Carmen/Canvas. Check that for the specific quality criteria for which points are assigned.

Media Use Diary:

You will each keep a diary for one week to document and reflect on your own media use habits and time spent. Once you gather the information about how you used media during that week, you should do some analysis to summarize it and assess how well you are using the time to inform yourself. The final section should be devoted to a discussion of how you might improve your use of media, suggest some new sources to pay attention to in order to become better informed. I will provide some additional details in written form. Also consult the rubric for this assignment.

Participation Exercises: From time to time during the semester I will ask you to read a short article, view a brief film, play a game, or write a short reaction to something. These will have a limited time frame. Each will be worth just a few points. I will announce these in class, send you a note about these via email, and you will be able to find each of them under the assignments tab.

Grades:

The OSU “standard scheme” of points grading as implemented by Carmen is used and I will try to keep the grades on Carmen’s grade book. Here is the OSU “standard scheme”: 93 - 100 (A), 90 - 92.99 (A-), 87 - 89.99 (B+), 83 - 86.99 (B), 80 - 82.99 (B-), 77 - 79.99 (C+), 73 - 76.99 (C), 70 - 72.99 (C-), 67 - 69.99 (D+), 60 - 66.99 (D), Below 60 (E). Note that *there is no rounding* in the points system.

The following are the components of your grade for the term:

- Quizzes: 20% (4@5 points each)
- One-page response papers: 15% (3@5 points each)
- Media use diary: (10 points)
- Participation exercises (10 points)
- Midterm Exam: (20 points)
- Final Exam: (25 points)

Your grade will be determined according to your performance on these items. There will be no opportunities to re-take exams, redo assignments, or complete additional or extra credit work.

Quizzes must be taken on the designated days/times. No early or late exams are allowed except in the case of an illness or family emergency. In the rare event that an illness or emergency arises, it is your responsibility to inform me *prior* to the scheduled exam time, and provide me with written documentation of the emergency.

Attendance:

The course will be conducted in a hybrid format. *Attendance is required at all class sessions.* I will take attendance at all or most class sessions. You will need to participate actively in order to get maximum benefit from the course. Evidence clearly shows that students who come to class regularly and engage in discussion learn more and generally do better in the class. This means you will need to come to the class, stay for the entire period, and be prepared for it by reading the assigned materials or viewing films in advance. This is very important. Please make an effort to be on time for the class. The time we spend together in class is not the time to catch up on emails, texts, Twitter, Tumblr, Tinder, Instagram, etc. You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet at each class meeting. Do not sign in for another person as this can be treated as an instance of academic misconduct.

COURSE POLICIES

E-mail and Carmen

Throughout the semester, expect to receive e-mails from me regarding the course. As such, it is important that you check your OSU e-mail account regularly and make sure that course e-mails are not going to your junk folder. All e-mail is automatically sent to students' osu.edu accounts. Therefore, you must regularly check your OSU e-mail. If you discover any broken links or other issues in our course content, please let me know immediately.

To succeed in this course, it is essential that you have regular and reliable online access. I will post announcements and/or send out individual and class e-mails with updated information about the class. Consequently you should regularly (*i.e., daily*) check Carmen.

Late Work

Computer and/or system problems do NOT excuse late work or missed quizzes or exams. If you wait until the last minute to submit assignments, you are taking a huge risk. Computer, internet, and life-related problems happen every day, and they are almost always unexpected and seemingly beyond one's control. Be prepared by completing your assignments early.

Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct

OSU's Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/csc>) defines academic misconduct as "any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process."

While many people associate academic misconduct with "cheating," the term encompasses a wider scope of student behaviors which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Violation of course rules;

- Violation of program regulations;
- Knowingly providing or receiving information during a course exam or program assignment;
- Possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during a course exam or program assignment;
- Knowingly providing or using assistance in the laboratory, on field work, or on a course assignment, unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor or, where appropriate, a project/research supervisor;
- Submission of work not performed in a course: This includes (but is not limited to) instances where a student fabricates and/or falsifies information for an academic assignment. It also includes instances where a student submits data or information (such as a term paper) from one course to satisfy the requirements of another course, unless submission of such work is permitted by the instructor;
- Submitting plagiarized work for a course/program assignment;
- Serving as or asking another student to serve as a substitute while taking an exam.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University's *Code of Student Conduct* (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Disability Services

If you have a documented disability, please register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations, so they may be implemented in a timely fashion. If you have any questions about this process, please contact Disability Services at 614-292-3307 or slds@osu.edu

Technology Use and General Politeness

Our classroom meetings should be focused on lecture and discussion—not for texting, web browsing, e-mailing, etc. Technology use such as noisy cell phones, Internet shopping, and text messaging at your desk are a distraction to the

instructor and your fellow students. Please be respectful of those around you by turning off or silencing your phone and putting it away before class.

Laptops and other portable electronic devices should NOT be used in the classroom unless explicitly required as part of the day's topic. This is becoming standard practice in courses in our department by most every instructor. Violation of this policy may result in you being asked to leave the classroom.

Notes may be taken with paper and pen, or with an iPad and Apple pencil. Not only is this courteous for those around you who are spending their time and money in the classroom without being distracted by those around them, it is also beneficial for you as a student. Here's why:

Although laptops or tablets can be used for productive purposes in a classroom, it is my observation (reinforced by growing academic research) that they primarily serve as distractions—to those who use them, those nearby, and the person leading the class. Although some might argue that laptops are beneficial for taking notes, considerable scientific research demonstrates that using laptops for note taking impedes learning compared to paper and pen note taking. If you'd like to read a brief summary of just some of the evidence, check out the *Scientific American* article "A Learning Secret: Don't Take Notes with a Laptop":

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>

To maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning during the discussion-based classroom meetings of this hybrid course, please be courteous to other members of the class and treat them with the dignity and respect that you expect from others.

Disruptions:

Disruptions and distractions (including talking during lecture; text messaging or other phone or computer use), threatening behavior, and negative participation (e.g., use of inappropriate language or derogatory speech) will not be tolerated. Any student who engages in such behavior may be asked to leave class, and be reported to appropriate university officials. Cell phones are considered a disruption. Turn your cell phone off completely before the start of class.

Attendance while having flu and other flu-like illnesses:

You should *not* attend class while ill with influenza. The illness and self-isolation period will usually be about a week. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the flu to others. Most students should be able to complete a successful semester despite a flu-induced absence. If you are absent due to the flu, you will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. Completion of all assignments and exams assures the greatest chance for students to develop heightened understanding and content mastery. The opportunity to complete all

assignments and exams supports the university's desire to enable students to make responsible situational decisions, including the decision to avoid spreading a contagious virus to other students, staff, and faculty, without endangering their academic work. Students with the flu do not need to provide a physician's certification of illness. However, ill students should inform their teachers (but not through personal contact in which there is a risk of exposing others to the virus) as soon as possible that they are absent because of the flu.

Diversity

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our school, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

Student Academic Services

Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services' website provides support for student academic success. Information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors can be obtained through this website. The site is:
<http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

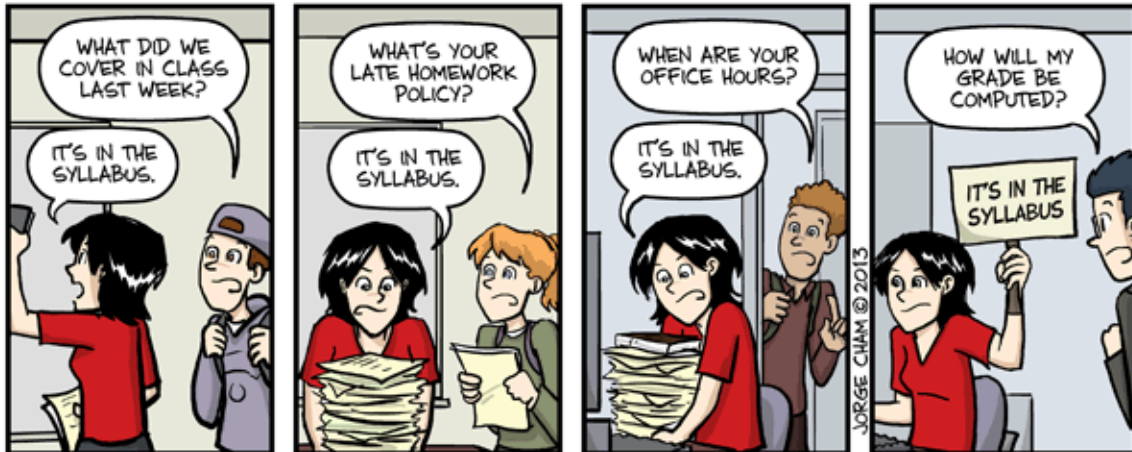
Student Services

The Student Service Center assists with financial aid matters, tuition and fee payments. Please see their site at: <http://ssc.osu.edu>

Copyright Disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the

course.



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS (SUBJECT TO REVISION AND ADDITIONS)

Week 1, August 21, 23

Course introduction;
Citizens in democracy and open culture.

Read:

Smolla, R.A. (1992). The case for an open culture (pp. 3-17). In R.A. Smolla. *Free speech in an open society*. New York: Knopf.

Week 2, August 28, 30

Citizenship, new media and democracy

Kligler-Vilenchik, N. (2017). Alternative citizenship models: Contextualizing new media and the new “good citizen.” *New Media and Society*, 19, 11, 1887-1903.

The Economist. (2017). Once considered a boom to democracy social media have started to look like its nemesis. Nov. 4.

Week 3, September 4, 6

How people inform themselves

Suran, M. & Kilgo, D. (2015). Freedom from the press? How anonymous gatekeepers on Reddit covered the Boston Marathon bombing. *Journalism Studies*.

Pew Research Center. (2017). Americans’ attitudes about the news media deeply divided along partisan lines. May 10. Read pp. 3-20. Skim the rest of document.

Quiz 1 online on Carmen’s quiz function. The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until Tuesday, September 11, at 11 a.m.

Week 4, September 11, 13

News, attention and (mis)information

World Economic Forum. Digital Wildfires. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2018/digital-wildfires/>

Meyer, R. (2018). The grim conclusions of the largest-ever study of fake news. *The Atlantic*. March 8.

Mocanu, D. et al. (2015). Collective attention in the age of (mis)information. *Computers in Human Behavior* 51, 1198-1204.

Week 5, September 18, 20

(Mis)information examples

Nyhan, B. (2010). Why the death panel myth wouldn't die: Misinformation in the health care reform debate. *The Forum*, 8,1, Article 5.

Pasek, J., Sood, G. & Krosnick, J.A. (2015). Misinformed about the Affordable Care Act? Leveraging uncertainty to assess the prevalence of misperceptions. *Journal of Communication*, 65, 660-673.

Dropp, K. & Nyhan, B. (2017). Nearly half of Americans don't know Puerto Ricans are fellow citizens. *New York Times*. September 26.

Quiz 2 online on Carmen's quiz function. The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until Tuesday, September 25, at 11 a.m.

Week 6, September 25, 27

Collective behavior and panics

Hamel, L. et al. (2014). *Kaiser Health Policy News Index: Special Focus on Ebola*. Retrieved from <http://kff.org/global-health-policy/poll-finding/kaiser-health-policy-news-index-special-focus-on-ebola/>

Gonsalves, G. & Staley, P. (2015). Panic, paranoia, and public health – The AIDS epidemic's lessons for Ebola. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 371, 25, 2348-2349.

Boydston, A.E., et al. (2014). Two faces of media attention: Media storm versus non-storm coverage. *Political Communication*, 41, 509-531.

Lohr, S. (2018). It's true: False news spread's faster and wider, and humans are to blame. *New York Times*, March 8.

Week 7, October 2, 4 [NOTE: Class meets today in Derby Room 3136.]

Communicating conspiracy theories and conspiracies

Oliver, J.E. & Rahn, W.M. (2016). Rise of the Trumpenvolk: Populism in the 2016 election. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 667, 189-206.

Feuer, A. (2016). The ideological roots of the Oregon standoff. *New York Times*, January 9.

Cawley, R.M. (2016). Behind the Oregon standoff, you'll find big questions about democracy. *New York Times Magazine*. January 8.

Frontline. (2017). American patriot: Inside the armed uprising against the federal government. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/american-patriot-inside-the-armed-uprising-against-the-federal-government/>

Midterm exam begins October 4 online at Carmen.

The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until Tuesday, October 9, at 11 a.m. Note that there is an objective part of the exam and an essay part. Please follow all directions.

Week 8, October 9, 11

What political messages do riots communicate?

Wilkinson, S.I. (2009). Riots. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12, 329-43.

Autumn Break is October 11-12. No class on Thursday.

Week 9, October 16, 18

Constructing, framing, defining and redefining social problems

Goode, E. & Nachman, B. (1994). Moral panics: Culture, politics and social construction. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 20, 149-71.

Quiz 3 online on Carmen's quiz function. The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until Tuesday, October 23, at 11 a.m.

Week 10, October 23, 25

Intermedia agenda-setting: A case study of manufacturing and spreading fear, hatred, and division in society

Bail, C. (2014). *Terrified: How anti-Muslim fringe organizations became mainstream*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1, The cultural environment and collective behavior.

Recommended:

Bail, C.A. (2012). The fringe effect: Civil society organizations and the evolution of media discourse about Islam since the September 11 attacks. *American Sociological Review*, 77,6, 855-879.

Week 11, October 30, November 1

Communication in the 2016 election.

Watch: Frontline. Putin's revenge, Part 2. <https://www.pbs.org/video/putins-revenge-part-two-wpsiq2/>

Graff, G.M. (2017). A guide to Russia's high tech toolbox for subverting U.S. democracy. *Wired*. August 13.

Confessore, N. & Wakabayashi, D. (2017). How Russia harvested American rage to reshape U.S. policy. *The New York Times*. October 9.

Mayer, J. (2017). The reclusive hedge-fund tycoon behind the Trump presidency: How Robert Mercer exploited America's populist insurgency. *New Yorker*, March 27.

Week 12, November 6, 8

(Mis)Communicating economic news and policy: Effects of the Great Recession of 2008.

McCarty, N., Poole, K.T. & Rosenthal, H. (2013). *Political bubbles: Financial crises and the failure of American democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Prologue: A bubble couple.

Blinder, A.S. (2013). The macroeconomic policy paradox: Failing by succeeding. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 650, 26-43.

Recommended:

Bartels, L.M. (2013). Political effects of the Great Recession. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 650, 47-71.

Quiz 4 online on Carmen's quiz function. The exam window will open after class on Thursday and remain open until Tuesday, November 13, at 11 a.m.

Week 13, November 13, 15

The ongoing flight over clean energy.

Berry, J.M. & Portney, K.E. (2017). Tea Party vs. Agenda 21: Local groups and sustainability policies in U.S. cities. *Environmental Politics*, 26,1, 118-137.

Humes, Edward. (2014). Throwing shade: Fearing lost profits, the nation's investor owned utilities are moving to blot out the solar revolution. *Sierra*, June. (Carmen)

Week 14, November 20, 22

Astroturf vs. Grassroots

View the film Hot Coffee at the ODEE Secured Media Library.

No class November 22. University is closed for Thanksgiving vacation.

Week 15, November 27, 29

Election issues: Gerrymandering, voter turnout, voter suppression, voter impersonation fraud, and the Electoral College.

Mayer, Jane (2012). The voter fraud myth. *New Yorker*.

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/10/29/the-voter-fraud-myth>

Other readings TBA

Week 16, December 4, (Last class day)

Final summary comments and review.

Please be sure to complete your online SEI (course/instructor evaluation) for Comm 4814.

Week 17, Monday, December 10, Final Exam, 2-3:45 p.m.

Note that all final exams must be turned in by 3:45 p.m.