

**Objective:**      The focus of this course is part history and part analysis of current political communication contexts – specifically, political advertising. We will be exploring the major practices of political advertising throughout American history and the present incarnations of this communication genre, with special attention being given to spot types and their implications for American democracy. This class will take advantage of the current presidential election and will provide students with opportunities to not only critique “poli spots” but also to create them.

**Readings:**      There will be no formal textbook for this class, but there will be regular readings. All reading assignments are listed below. Book chapters and excerpts will be available through the library’s e-reserve. All journal articles can be accessed through the library’s “online journal” resources, found on their Web site. *You are responsible for getting these readings for yourself!* I will provide you with instructions on how to access e-res and how to find the articles. If you have any trouble getting any of the readings, you should seek help from me or from the Reference Desk in the library. You may choose whether you want to print the readings off to have a hard copy of them or whether or want to read them on the computer. [[Hint: In the calendar for the semester, assigned book chapters are listed title first. Articles are listed by author.]]

**Grading:**

Midterm exam:      **30%**

Final exam:      **30%**

*We will discuss the format these exams will take as the semester progresses.*

Group project:      **25%**

*You and your “advertising team” will be asked to create an advertisement for a candidate, based on what you will learn in this class, and to provide a support for your ad strategy from the theories and studies we will be discussing throughout the semester. A group presentation of your ad will be given at the end of the semester. Additional information about this project will be provided at a later date.*

Homework:      **10%**

*Throughout the semester you will be asked to write short reaction papers, to analyze some political ads, and to find certain information. Thoughtful, insightful, punctual work will be expected of these assignments. I will be looking for application of the ideas and theories discussed in class and in your assigned readings.*

*\*\*\*\*Homework assignments should always be typed, in 12-pt. Times New Roman or Courier font, double-spaced, with standard margins. I will not accept homework that is not properly formatted and I will not accept late assignments. As there is no computer in my office, homework must always be handed in on paper. If you experience printer problems or are absent from class, you should submit your homework electronically or on a disk but must hand in a hard copy as soon as possible.\*\*\*\**

Class Participation:      **5%**

*It is expected that you will come to class regularly and readily participate in the class discussions.*

*\*\*\*NOTE: This class is designed to encourage student participation. This is not, however, a forum for arguing about political positions, beliefs, and affiliations; partisanship in class is not encouraged and it is asked that students keep their praise and criticisms focused on the communication elements of advertising, not on parties or individual candidates (that is, it's OK to criticize or compliment a candidate's communication strategy but not to discuss at length the merits or weaknesses of people & parties). Views from all political affiliations are welcome in class and a friendly environment should be maintained, without students feeling threatened for having conflicting views; I will not tolerate excessive unrelated political discussions. I will likewise strive to keep my personal partisanship out of the classroom.\*\*\**

Your final grade for the course will be the weighted average of the grades you earn in these areas. Numeric grades are converted to letter grades by the following breakdown:

100-93: A	92-89: A-	88-85: B+	84-81: B	80-77: B-	76-73: C+
72-69: C	68-66: C-	65-62: D+	61-59: D	58-56: D-	55-0: E

### **Attendance:**

Attendance in class is necessary. Attendance will be taken and it is expected that you will be in class on a regular basis and *on time*. If an emergency takes you out of class for an extended period of time (1 week or more), you are required to contact me as soon as possible so we can make arrangements for you to stay current on the work.

*Punctual attendance at exams and your presentation is absolutely mandatory!!!* With the exception of extreme emergencies, failure to show up for an exam or for the final presentation will result in an automatic "E" (fail) on the assignment. If you do have an emergency, it is expected that you will provide adequate documentation as to your necessary absence.

### **WebCT:**

This course will have a home on WebCT. Materials you will find on the WebCT site include, a copy of the syllabus, the course calendar, homework assignments, group project details, information about exams, and Web site URLs that you will need to use in the course. Generally, lecture and discussion notes will not be posted as WebCT is not a substitute for class attendance (sorry). If you have problems with computer/Internet access, please see me in advance so alternate arrangements can be made for your assignments.

### **Cancellations:**

In the case of a class cancellation, you will find any necessary information on the WebCT – such as lecture notes and assignments. If there is a case of bad weather that does not close the campus, please check the WebCT for notices that I have cancelled this class; I live 25 miles to the northwest of the campus on a twisty country road in the hills, so I may find it necessary to cancel class in inclement weather. In the case of a cancelled class, I will post the cancellation notice no later than 1 hour before class time.

### **Tentative Semester Overview**

Unless otherwise noted or discussed, readings are due on the day they are listed. Written homework assignments will be given as the course progresses.

### Course Intro

8/31            Review syllabus, discuss course expectations, begin talking about political ads.

### Part 1

***The rise and development of the political spot.*** Political advertising as we know it was not created with the invention of the television, but actually began taking shape with the elections of some of earliest presidents. We will look at how political advertising came about and discuss some of the foundations and precedents for some of the most famous political ads and today's ads. Can you make any comparisons between early campaign efforts and modern advertising techniques?

9/2 --Packaging the Presidency, (Jamieson) ch. 1

9/7 --Political Campaign Communication, (Trent & Friedenber) pp. 120-126.

--Eloquence in the Electronic Age, (Jamieson) ch. 5

???In-class Video: TBA???

### Part 2

***Types, forms & content of "polispots" and classic ads:*** We will continue our study of the history of ads by reviewing purposes, and basic techniques of television "spot" advertising. In the process, we will consider some of the "classics" of presidential spot advertising and the lessons political consultants have drawn from them. Over the years, political consultants have developed some rather standard "formulas" for political spot ads and a conventional wisdom of what sorts of ads work best for particular purposes. In a different context, this conventional wisdom might be described as a "theory" of political advertising. Television spot ads have obviously changed significantly since they were first used by Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1950s. Comparing Eisenhower's spot ads to those used in the current campaign by President Bush & Senator Kerry, what do you see as the major "innovations" in political spot ads since the 1950s?

9/9 --Political Campaign Communication, (Trent & Friedenber) pp. 126-134.

--Goldstein & Freedman (2002 Jan-Mar) Lessons learned: Campaign advertising in the 2000 elections. *Political Communication* 19, 1: 5-28.

???In-class Video: *The Living Room Campaign* ???

### Part 3

***The rhetoric and effects of the attack ad:*** The most debated and controversial topic in political advertising is, no doubt, the issue of negative or "attack" advertising. At various times, there even have been attempts to legislate against such ads. Negative advertising also has inspired much research, yet we still do not know for sure why some attack ads seem to work and others seem to backfire. The conventional wisdom among political consultants tends to be that attack ads generally work, despite surveys that show overwhelming majorities of voters expressing their distaste for negative advertising. At one time, attack ads generally were employed only by candidates trailing in the polls, and even then only in last-ditch efforts to turn the tide. Now, however, campaigns routinely deploy attack ads from the start, although such ads often are now more subtle and indirect than in the early days of television. What effect do these ads have on the electorate?

9/14 --Political Campaign Communication, (Trent & Friedenber) pp. 135-143.

--Schenck-Hamlin, Procter, & Rumsey (2000). The influence of negative advertising frames on political cynicism and politician accountability. *Human Communication Research* 26, 1: 53-74

9/16 NO CLASS

- 9/21 --Freedman & Goldstein (1999) Measuring media exposure and the effects of negative campaign ads. *American Journal of Political Science*, 43: 1189-1208.  
 --Ansolabehere & Valentine (1994). Does attack advertising demobilize the electorate? *American Political Science Review*, 88: 829-838.

#### Part 4

**Issues, controversies, and the effects of political ads:** Today we consider some of the persistent controversies over political spot ads and the on-going debate over their effects. Can meaningful political discussion be carried on via 30-second spot ads? Are such ads manipulative or generally untruthful? And what are the effects of such ads, not only on voters, but also on campaign news coverage, the costs of campaigns, and the electoral system in general? Enormous amounts of money are spent on political advertising. Is that money well-spent by the candidates? Do ads actually change votes? Can advertising be viewed as an investment in the political system, or do ads actually undermine the democratic process by trivializing elections and alienating voters? Should political advertising be somehow regulated?

- 9/23 --Air Wars, (West) ch. 5 & 10.

- 9/28 --TBA {Brians & Wattenberg (1996). Campaign issue knowledge & salience: Comparing reception from TV commercials, TV news, & newspapers. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40: 172-193. OR  
 Benoit (2000, fall) A functional analysis of political advertising across media, 1998. *Communication Studies* 51,3: 274-295.}

- 9/30 -- Dirty Politics, (Jamieson) ch. 5-6  
 In-Class Video: *News Coverage of Political Ads*

- 10/5 --Air Wars, (West) ch. 4.

- 10/7 In-Class Movie: Wag the Dog  
 10/12 (Movie continued)

- 10/14 Midterm Review

### 10/19 Midterm Exam

#### Part 5

**Age, gender & race in the political spot.** There are many things to be considered when trying to create an image for a candidate and make an impression on the voters in a political ad. We will examine and discuss the uses of age, gender, and race in image-making and the obstacles presented to minority candidates.

- 10/21 --Sherr, S.A. (1999). Scenes from the political playground: An analysis of the symbolic use of children in presidential campaign advertising. *Political Communication* 16: 45-59.  
 --Hitchon, Chang & Harris (1997). Should women emote? *Political Communication*, 14: 49-69.

10/26 In-Class Movie: *The Contender*  
10/28 (Movie continued) + time for group work

11/2 --TBA (Duncan Lacy selection on e-res)

11/4 In-class Movie: *Bullworth*  
11/9 (Movie continued) + time for group work

11/11 Class Cancelled.  
It is strongly suggested that you use your common time to get together with your group.

#### Part 6

***The future of political advertising: Direct response and the Internet:*** *Advances in computer technologies, along with the exigencies of fund-raising in the modern campaign, gave rise to direct mail, computer-assisted telephone solicitation, and other new methods of campaigning in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, the internet is playing an increasingly important role in political campaigns. Capable of targeting sympathetic audiences and proven contributors, these technologies provide the most efficient and effective means of raising money from small, geographically dispersed contributors, as dictated by the campaign finance reforms of the 1970s. As more "private" or "narrow-casted" communications, they also may encourage more aggressive, more provocative appeals than "broadcast" media. As such, however, these new media raise new questions about the ethics of campaign communication and the effects of campaign reforms.*

11/16 --Air Wars, (West) pp. 57-64

#### Part 7

***Madison Avenue meets Pennsylvania Avenue:*** *The political campaign has become a professionally run marketing effort. A candidate is a product equivalent to Coca Cola, and the same people created ads for both. We will wrap the semester up with a brief look at what makes a professional, well-developed campaign effort.*

11/18 --No Place For Amateurs, (Johnson) ch. 1-3

11/23 In-class time for group work.

11/25 No Class

11/30 Group Presentations

12/2 Group Presentations

12/7 Group Presentations (last class)

**12/16 8-10 a.m. Final Exam**

**Semester Agreement for COM378 (Political Advertising with C. Knopf)**

I \_\_\_\_\_ [your name] affirm that I have read the syllabus and that I understand the policies outlined within it.

*{ Check off each statement that is true for you. }*

- I understand the weight of each aspect of the final grade and how the letter grades will be interpreted.
- I understand what is expected of me regarding each aspect of my final grade. I understand that my homework is supposed to be turned in on time and in the proper format in order to receive credit.
- I understand that my presence is expected in class and that if I cannot attend class I should make arrangements to keep up to date on the work.
- I understand that only extenuating circumstances should prevent me from taking an exam on time.
- I understand that I am responsible for myself in this course – for getting and doing the readings and the written assignments.
- I understand what the course will be covering and how the semester will unfold.
- I understand that I am encouraged to contact the instructor if I should have any difficulties in or with the course.

*{ If there is anything you do not understand or have questions about, please explain or ask below. }*

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*{ If you have any concerns about or disagreements with anything stated in the syllabus, please let me know at this time so that we may head off any potential problems. }*

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**Signature**

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**Date**