

COMM370: Contemporary Political Communication

Dr. Knopf (Morey248: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-10:45, Wednesdays 12:30-3)
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Course Description: An examination of US politics in order to better understand how "political reality" is constructed through communication. To that end, the course will examine communication during particular political events, during acts of governance, and particular campaigns, and will discuss how that communication effects and is effected by the media. We will consider five broad areas of political communication: civic engagement & deliberation, campaign communication (especially presidential during the 2016 election season), race & gender in politics, media, and satire.

Course Objectives: In taking this class, you will be able to:

- Understand and explain the roles of communication in society – including its relationship to other disciplines and the issues of marginalized and/or minority voices: This course is focused on the ways in which communication shapes political reality and influences political efficacy.
- Read and understand contemporary scholarship, with knowledge of the discipline's history: Through the readings, you will learn about different scholastic studies of political communication.
- Construct and evaluate oral, written, and/or visual arguments & messages, with consideration to appropriate audience analysis.
- Employ effective listening skills: As a political communication, and speaking intensive, class you will engage in formal and informal discussions and debate. Your attentiveness and engagement are graded portions of these activities.

This course is designated as "SI" – Speaking Intensive. The assumption is that everyone has already taken an FS course and therefore knows how to create and deliver a speech and is ready to refine their speech skills.

Texts & Course Materials:

- Readings on Moodle
- Paper
- Syllabus (copy permanently on Moodle)
- media access

Grading:

- reading summaries – 20%
- attendance and participation – 20%
- campaign msg share – 20%
- class forums – 20%
- satire presentation = 20%

☆Full assignment descriptions & instructions are under "Assignment Packet" Use them. ☆

Final Grades are broken down **in this class** as follows:

- 4.0 = 94-100
- 3.7 = 88-93
- 3.3 = 82-87
- 3.0 = 76-81
- 2.7 = 70-75
- 2.3 = 64-69
- 2.0 = 58-63
- 1.7 = 52-57
- 1.3 = 46-51
- 1.0 = 40-45
- (0.0 = 0-39)

☆ Course grades start at 0 points, with each completed assignment adding to that number. A 2.0 is a "satisfactory" grade that indicates the *minimum* has been achieved, or that the work is of an average acceptable quality. A 4.0 is attainable but will require much more than minimal effort. ☆

How to earn a minimum 2.3 in the course, guaranteed:

- Attend 25+/27 class sessions
 - Arrive late/leave early ≤4 times
 - Complete *all* work on time
- You can still earn up to a 4.0 if you do these things, and if you don't or are unable to do these you can still earn a 2.3 or higher in the course. If, however, you are worried about passing, this is the basic route to success.*

Assignment Descriptions: All assignments and their due dates are established at the start of the semester. This way you know what to expect, and when. You can plan ahead, both for time management and learning strategies. All due dates are indicated on the course calendar at the end of this syllabus. Due dates are absolute and non-negotiable. Details, instructions, rationales, and grading criteria for all assignments are outlined in the Assignment Packet section that follows the calendar. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with that information.

Challenging a Grade: If you identify an error in grading, I am always willing to admit to a mistake and correct it. If you want me to *reconsider* a grade, follow these steps:

- Wait at least 24 hours before deciding to seek reconsideration, but no longer than one week.
- Write a 1-2 page explanation of why the grade should be reconsidered identifying what type of change you seek and providing a reasoned argument and evidence in support of that change. The burden of proof in any disagreement over evaluation of your performance rests with you.
- Resubmit the original work (complete with grade & comments) along with the rationale.
- Allow two weeks for reconsideration. Accept the final decision. *I will reconsider each assignment only once.*

Extra Credit: Extra credit will **not** be available as an end-of-semester option to make-up-for or replace work that you did not do throughout the semester. It will never be given on an individual basis. It is only available as indicated in the assignments.

Due Dates/Late Work: **LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.**

✍ If you know in advance you will not be in class when an assignment is due, turn it in early.

✍ If you wake up sick when something is due, please email it by class time.

All due dates are on the course calendar.

Attendance: This is a live, non-virtual, non-mediated, communication course. Being present on time (and AWAKE) is necessary. **If you cannot consistently be present, on time, for class, you should withdraw.** Please note, on time attendance means that you, and not just your things, are in the classroom when it starts.

☆ You are solely responsible for catching up on work that you miss (always refer to the course calendar and to the potential kindness of classmates). Absences are not an excuse for late work or for being unaware of course expectations. Make-ups for assignments will only be granted in rare instances and usually only with documentation of an unavoidable emergency.

In the case of **college-sanctioned activities or religious observances**, arrangements should be made prior to/in advance of the absence. [Note: Grades that factor in attendance will be adjusted for such events as long as notice is given.]

Incompletes: Incompletes, or other arrangements for course completion, can be planned only in advance to the semester's end when there is an emergency that makes completing the course otherwise impossible.

Academic Integrity & Dishonesty: A pledge of academic honesty is made by all students at SUNY Potsdam, indicating that you understand & comply with the requirements set forth by instructors the Academic Honor Code. To plagiarize is to pass off ideas or words of someone else as your own without crediting the source, no matter what the source is or if you make some changes to the wording or add in some of your own words/ideas. ***In the event of plagiarism on an assignment in this course you will have 24 hours to correct or authenticate your work or receive a zero on the assignment. Other forms of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on an exam, or attempting to cheat, will result in a 33% lower grade on the work.***

Etiquette: The success of this course is directly related to the sense of community that we develop in the classroom. Any communication or behavior that potentially interferes with the learning environment of other students will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior - even minor disruptions - may result in your being told to leave class. Repeated offenses may result in course failure.

This class is designed to encourage student participation. I ask that most of our political discussion be focused on communication rather than issues, though all discussions should be respectful of differing opinions. Difference is a strength, not a flaw. Furthermore, if disagreements happen, everyone should be open to having their perspective changed rather than being focused on changing that of others. Views from all political affiliations are welcome in class and a friendly environment should be maintained. I will strive to keep my personal partisanship out of the classroom – though please realize that the fact that I am human with personal opinions is not the same thing as being biased. Also, you may find that excessive cynicism about politics generally will be as counterproductive to you as partisan zealotry; to get the most out of this class, you will need to keep an open mind, be willing to self-challenge your current beliefs, and think critically about all perspectives and positions.

Fall 2016 Calendar for COMM370 – KEEP TRACK OF DUE DATES!

	TUESDAY	THURSDAY
Wk1	8/30:	9/1: Trivia Game
Wk2	9/6: Publics & Counterpublics - Porrovecchio & recap due <i>campaign message share #1</i>	9/8: Web Engagement - Bennett et al & recap due <i>campaign message share #2</i>
Wk3	9/13: Battle in Seattle <i>campaign message share #3</i>	9/15: Battle in Seattle <i>campaign message share #4</i>
Wk4	9/20: Partisan Speech Patterns – Jarvis & recap due <i>campaign message share #5</i>	9/22: Acceptance & Keynote Speeches Jarvis2 & Benoit et al <i>campaign message share #6</i>
Wk5	9/27: Concession & Victory Speeches – Ritter/Howell & recap due <i>campaign message share #7</i>	9/29: Ad Buys & Strategies (The West Wing “King Corn” ^{S6E12SD37}) – Franz/Ridout & Hoegg/Lewis due <i>campaign message share #8</i>
Wk6	10/4: Debate Strategies & Perception (The West Wing “Freedonia” ^{S6E12SD37}) – Benoit & Warner et al due <i>campaign message share #9</i>	10/6: Pornification of Politics Anderson & recap due <i>campaign message share #10</i>
Wk7	10/11: <u>Fall Recess, no class</u>	10/13: Minstrelry & Race Card in Politics Sparks & Lee/Moran <i>campaign message share #11</i>
Wk8	10/18: <i>The Contender</i> <i>campaign message share #12</i>	10/20: <i>The Contender</i> <i>campaign message share #13</i>
Wk9	10/25: YouTube & Social Media Hess & Kushin due <i>campaign message share #14</i>	10/27: Polling Wei et al & recap due <i>campaign message share #15</i>
Wk10	11/1: <i>All the President’s Men</i> <i>campaign message share #16</i>	11/3: <i>All the President’s Men</i> <i>campaign message share #17</i>
Wk11	11/8: NIF Media Forum <i>The Simpsons</i> , class election TUNE IN TO ELECTION COVERAGE!!! <i>campaign message share #18</i>	11/10: <u>No class, National Communication Assoc.</u>
Wk12	11/15: Election Night Discussion <i>campaign message share #19</i>	11/17: Parody & Late-Night Trends Hariman & Feldmen/Young due <i>campaign message share #20</i>
Wk13	11/22: Satire Effects Placone/Tumolo & Hoffman/Young due <i>campaign message share #21</i>	11/24: <u>Thanksgiving recess, no class</u>
Wk14	11/29: Political Satire presentations <i>campaign message share #22</i>	12/1: Political satire presentations <i>campaign message share #23</i>
Wk15	12/6: NCA Satire Debate <i>campaign message share #24</i>	12/8: Trivia game <i>campaign message share #25</i>
Wk16	<u>No finals week meeting</u>	

Assignments are due by the start of class on the day specified.

COMM370 "ASSIGNMENT PACKET"

Reading Recaps (20 points): Discussions will be more robust and meaningful if you do the assigned readings on time – especially because class lectures will not be strictly a review of the assigned articles, but will build on the readings for more in-depth information. To encourage you to keep up with the readings, and to help you through them, you will regularly submit HAND-WRITTEN summaries on half-sheets of paper. (The reason for this approach is to reduce the urge to copy-and-paste things from the internet and to keep the workload in check, pushing you to be concise and keep your focus narrow).

The articles and deadlines for recaps are noted in the calendar. There are only 6. Please note, that when there is reading assigned without a recap it is to help you with your workload because the reading is double the norm. You are still expected to do the readings and may be called on in class to talk about them. This assignment takes the place of exams in this class, so they should be treated with the same seriousness of purpose and respect for preparation as an exam. If this assignment fails to encourage a majority of the class to read regularly and thoughtfully, exams and/or pop quizzes will be used instead.

The recap will take the following form:

Your Name (worth 1/4 point)

Abbreviated Article Title (worth 1/4 point)

Article Topic (worth 1/4 point)

2-3 Things you found interesting from the Literature Review/Introduction (worth 1 point)

The article's goal/or research question (worth 1/2 point)

What the author(s) discovered in the research. (worth 3/4 points)

The following information should help guide you through the article reading process:

Keep in mind that authors of journal articles always have an argument; they are trying to convince you of something. *This does not mean it is biased!* Quality academic journals have a rigorous review process to ensure that articles are built on new, research-based information

To Read the Article...

I. Look at the structure of the article (most follow the same format): **Abstract** (summary of the whole article), **Introduction & Literature Review** (why they did the research & what related research has already been done. This lays the foundation –the broader academic dialogue- for the article's contribution), **Methodology** (how they did the research. Ex: surveys, experiments, textual analysis...), **Results** (what happened/what was observed), **Discussion** (what the results mean), **Conclusion** (what was learned), **References** (whose research they referenced & built upon).

II. Read the abstract and conclusion **first** (these have the main points)

III. Read through the other sections, focusing on the literature review and the discussions. (Don't worry at if you don't understand the terminology in statistical studies, and don't let them freak you out.)

Campaign Message Share (20 points): At the start of each class meeting, one person will share a communication moment from the Election 2016 cycle that caught their attention. It might be an ad, a web page, a viral meme, a news item, a debate segment, a YouTube video, a pop culture reference, a piece of literature, an email, etc.

For the share, you will present the message to the class with any background or contextual explanation that may be required, follow up with a question or two for the class, moderate a 5-10 minute class discussion, and, if possible, relate the selected message to course lessons/content/readings.

Each person will randomly be assigned their day to share during the first week of class. If an emergency prevents you from being in class the day you are scheduled to share, you should email your message and questions in advance.

Because this assignment will help us to make use of the current election season and will allow the class content to be shaped by student interest and engagement, it is an important part of your grade. *Grading:*

-Present to present on assigned day (1 points)

-Ready to present on assigned day (3 points)

-Message shared was not previously discussed in class (2 points)

-Message shared was current (2 points)

-Discussion of message showed good understanding of context and/or course content (4 points)

-Question(s) for the class was thoughtful and/or provocative (4 points)

-Class discussion moderation was attentive and effective (4 points)

Satire Presentation (20 points): During this course, a lot of attention is given to political speaking in various forms. Your final project for the course will be to demonstrate your knowledge of political message content (and of the workings of political satire) by creating and presenting a satirical political campaign speech. Satire works by resembling the thing it mocks, so to create a true piece of satire, you will need to revisit and apply what you've learned about political speeches. For the assignment, you will speak as if YOU are a candidate for president. You may make an announcement speech, an acceptance speech, or a stump speech using elements of the speech genre and satiric techniques. The information below, and additional readings on Moodle, will help you prepare.

SATIRIC AND COMEDIC DEVICES-

1. **Mockery**--insulting or contemptuous action or speech
2. **Malapropism**--an act or habit of misusing words ridiculously, esp. by the confusion of words that are similar in sound. Ex. "that's just a Fig Newton of your imagination"
3. **Pun**--the humorous use of a word or phrase so as to emphasize or suggest its different meanings or applications, or the use of words that are alike or nearly alike in sound but different in meaning; Ex. "Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana." (Groucho Marx)
4. **Understatement**—1. A disclosure or statement that is less than complete. 2. Restraint or lack of emphasis in expression, as for rhetorical effect.
5. **Hyperbole**--Exaggeration--To represent as greater than is actually the case; to enlarge or increase to an abnormal degree
6. **Irony**--a technique of indicating, as through character or plot development, an intention or attitude opposite to that which is actually or ostensibly stated.
7. **Sarcasm**--A cutting, often ironic remark intended to wound; A form of wit that is marked by the use of sarcastic language and is intended to make its victim the butt of contempt or ridicule.
8. **Litote**--A kind of understatement, where the speaker uses negative of a word ironically to mean the opposite. Ex. *She's not the friendliest person I know.* (= she's an unfriendly person)
9. **Slang**--An informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech
10. **Parody**--A performance or piece in which the style of another is closely imitated for comic effect or in ridicule
11. **Mondegreen**--Words that result from the mishearing or misinterpretation of a statement or song lyric. Ex. "Hold me closer Tony Danza" (from *Hold me closer tiny dancer* by Elton John); "I led the pigeons to the flag" (for "I pledge allegiance to the flag"); "the girl with colitis goes by" (for "the girl with kaleidoscope eyes," in "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," by the Beatles).

NIF Media Forum (10 points): "For over 10 years, thousands of Americans have met each year through the National Issues Forums (NIF). These Forums have looked at important public issues. They have encouraged Americans to think about the hard choices we face on major questions like AIDS, racial inequality, and health care." In this class, we will use NIF publications and discussion questions to consider and reconsider the political system, providing an opportunity to engage in actual political discourse to improve public speaking skills in a discipline-specific and "real-world" format, while also considering not only political concerns but also political remedies. The NIF discussion will coincide with our examination and consideration of the role of the media in American politics and Election Night 2016. **To prepare for discussions, read pages 2-29 in the NIF Discussion Guide on "News Media and Society," available on Moodle.** Consider the three approaches presented. What do you like/dislike, agree/disagree with? Can you think of alternatives that are not presented here? What solution(s) would you propose or support? Be prepared to state a position or pose a question during the "Town Hall" discussion in class. Be familiar enough with the information that you can even question, challenge, or defend the comments other people might make.

Grading

- Remain attentive, tuned in, and focused during the discussion (1 points)
(texting, leaving, arriving late, doing work for other classes, surfing the Web, checking the weather or the sports scores are all examples of poor listening and rudeness)
- Make at least 1 contribution to the discussion (2 points)
If you're really active in the discussion, you'll have a chance to earn extra credit.
- Demonstrating familiarity with the readings (3 points)
(you might come to class with some notes, thoughts, or opinions about the materials you read jotted down on a piece of paper or an index card.)
- Showing your fellow citizens (classmates) courtesy; paying attention to what they have to say, and respecting their opinions even if you disagree (4 points)
(verbal and nonverbal hostility including name calling, subjective attacks, and yelling – including calling people or ideas stupid, dumb, wrong, etc. will not be tolerated)

Satire Debate (10 points): Using the same basic format as the NIF forum, you will read various position papers by the National Communication Association scholars regarding the influence of satire in American politics and use this information, combined with your own experiences and your knowledge from the rest of the course, to have a class-wide town-hall-style forum/debate. **To prepare for discussions, read the articles in the NCA Jon Stewart on Trial folder available on Moodle.** Consider the perspectives presented. What do you like/dislike, agree/disagree with? Be prepared to state a position or pose a question during the "Town Hall" discussion in class. Be familiar enough with the information that you can even question, challenge, or defend the comments other people might make.

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(verbal and nonverbal hostility including name calling, subjective attacks, and yelling – including calling people or ideas stupid, dumb, wrong, etc. will not be tolerated)

Attendance (10 points): The world is run by those who show up, so attendance will be graded as classes attended divided by classes held, adjusted for religious observances & college-sanctioned activities.

Participation (10 points): Democratic politics are premised on civic engagement. But there are many ways to engage. At the end of the semester, you will be given the following rubric to **self-evaluate** your class participation.

<i>Class Preparation</i>		<i>Class Time</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> I read & reviewed the PowerPoints regularly.	A	<input type="checkbox"/> I took notes regularly.	A
<input type="checkbox"/> I occasionally reviewed the PowerPoints.	C	<input type="checkbox"/> I took some notes.	C
<input type="checkbox"/> I never accessed the PowerPoints	F	<input type="checkbox"/> I rarely/never took notes.	F
<input type="checkbox"/> I sought assistance with difficult material	A	<input type="checkbox"/> I paid close attention in class.	A
<input type="checkbox"/> I spent extra time reviewing difficult material	C	<input type="checkbox"/> I tried to pay attention in class.	C
<input type="checkbox"/> I never worried about difficult material	F	<input type="checkbox"/> I used class time to chat with friends or do other work	F
<input type="checkbox"/> I did work not assigned.	A	<input type="checkbox"/> I participate orally in class discussions.	A
<input type="checkbox"/> I did all the assigned work on time	C	<input type="checkbox"/> I participated aurally in class discussions.	B
<input type="checkbox"/> I did some of the assigned work.	F	<input type="checkbox"/> I didn't pay much attention to class discussions.	F

Considering these factors, I rate my overall class participation effort as: (circle **one**)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10