

Comm370 - Fall 2009 - C. Knopf

Overview



Welcome!

Politics is more than just elections and scandals.

It is people.

Not just people like politicians and pundits, *but people like you.*

This course will ask you to step back from all the political hoopla that surrounds us to analyze it carefully and critically.

And, this course will ask you to step into the middle of (simulated) political events as a participant.

As a Speaking Intensive course, there will be lots of opportunities to talk about politics, politicians, scandals, media, and more, with a variety of activities that let you practice real political communication. There will also be games, movies, and television shows aplenty.



Using this Blackboard

Everything you need to navigate this course is (hopefully) available on this course Blackboard site: syllabus, assignment descriptions, due dates, grading outlines, classroom expectations, etcetera. The only thing *not* here is the actual course material; you have to read the text and come to class for that.

To find the information you need, use the menu on the left hand side of your screen. You will also find hyperlinks (underlined words in **bold** print) throughout the site that will zap you quickly to the resources you'll need. You will need to have the Adobe PDF viewer to fully utilize the site. It's free and safe, found [here](#).

Please, please, please take the time to review and familiarize yourself with this site and all the information it contains.

This is, essentially, an online and interactive syllabus. It replaces paper copies and handouts that waste money and harm the environment. Plus, even more importantly, it allows me to more easily provide you with lots of detailed information about course requirements and assignments, even linking you to outside resources. (If you prefer paper versions, however, you are welcome and encouraged to print them yourself; I have tried to make layouts as printer-friendly as possible.)



Quick Links

If you can't find what you're looking for, check the [Syllabus](#), or try these Quick Links to some of the key documents:

- [Course Calendar](#)

- **Assignments**
 - **Grading**
 - **Reading Requirements**
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Assistant Professor Christina Knopf**Email** knopfcm@potdam.edu**Work Phone** 315-267-2883**Office Location** Morey Hall 248**Office Hours** Monday~ by appointment
Tuesday~ 12:30-1:45, 5:00-5:30
Wednesday~ by appointment, or online**
Thursday~ 12:30-1:45
Friday~ by appointment

**Online office hours will be held through Facebook chat on Wednesdays from 11:00-1:00!

Personal Link <http://www.facebook.com/knopfcm>**Notes**

Hi! I'm Dr. K. I've been teaching at SUNY Potsdam since August 2006. I teach Basic Principles of Speech and a variety of courses related to political communication - everything from campaigns and governance, to social movements and suffrage. Some of my courses are more general, others focus in on gender issues or religion.

I live in Colton, just about 10 miles south of the SUNY Potsdam campus, with my cat, who is kind enough to share the house with me. I grew up in the Finger Lakes and I've lived in New York State my entire life, actually, and have four degrees from the SUNY system: an A.A. in liberal arts from Finger Lakes Community College, a B.A. in public relations and journalism from SUNY New Paltz, an M.A. in political communication from SUNY Albany, and a Ph.D. in cultural sociology & political communication from SUNY Albany.

Before teaching, I worked in public relations; I used to write press releases for FLCC, and I did Web design and technical writing for a small telecommunications software company. I also worked in journalism as a photographer, and in politics as a researcher for the New York State Assembly.

I'd be happy to talk about any of my college or career experiences with you, or about my cat, at any time, so feel free to ask. You can also look me up and get to know me on Facebook if you want to!

Syllabus



Outcomes & Goals



Course Calendar



Required Materials



Reading



Grading



Assignments



Attendance Policy



Classroom Rules

Outcomes & Goals



Course Description

This course is an overview of domestic (U.S.) 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 be giving especial attention to the role of the American citizen in the political process and will apply course material in political simulations, including Town Hall meetings, a juried trial, press conferences, and news reports.

At the end of the course, you will be in a position to better understand American political messages and will be better able to critique those messages; you will also be better able, and hopefully more willing, to participate fully in the political process.



Learning Outcomes

Cognitive Outcome:

You will be able to *understand* and *articulate* various perspectives about the political process in America. This will require that you *gather and process information* and *apply knowledge*.

Issues of political information flow and sources, different solutions to problems in the political process, various criticisms of politics in America, and more will be explored through readings, discussions, media presentations, and simulated activities.

Affective Outcomes:

This course will encourage you to improve their *organizational* skills, both in terms of time management and information consumption, while also asking you to *internalize* the material and ideas that are presented.

Toward this end, no exams will be given in the course. Instead, you will be held accountable for every assigned reading by posting reading reactions to the course Blackboard. Through these responses, you will be expected to keep up with course material in a timely manner and will need to internalize material, not just memorize or "regurgitate" it. You will also need to be prepared for quiz-style questions in an election-themed game that will take place throughout the semester.

Social Outcome:

You will improve interpersonal skills and *relating to others*.

Because this course focuses on deliberation and citizen participation in the political process, you will improve your small group and public speaking skills through various speech-centered activities.



Course Goals

We are bombarded with information everyday. Our friends' status updates. The results of the latest Facebook quiz for the friends of our friends' friends. Casualty counts from the Middle East. Tox screens for dead singers. Politicians' sex scandals. Even why we should buy the air freshener that looks like glass art, has a fan, changes scents, is programmable, or will trick our friends into thinking we baked a pie.

From all of this junk, we are supposed to gain enough knowledge to be responsible and productive citizens. We are supposed to figure out who to trust, how to vote, and what to do.

Yeah, good luck with that.

This course will hopefully help you to break through some of the noise, to make sense of the gobbledygook, and will, maybe, also encourage you to care more and even to act more.

We'll talk about what's right and wrong with the American political system, why we should care, and what we can do. My goal is to give you a forum where your experiences and your thoughts take center stage so that you can see they matter.

The purposes of this course are for you to:

- become well-versed in the basics of political communication.
 - learn about trends in political communication research.
 - practice and think about political communication theory, research, and exercises critically.
 - refine your public speaking skills through the enactment of political speech
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General Education Outcomes

This course carries the General Education designator of "SI" – Speaking Intensive. This means you will participate in a semester-long series of oral communication assignments that strengthen understanding of effective oral communication in

the discipline. Specifically, we will engage in speaking assignments that mimic actual deliberative political communication in the world outside the classroom.

The assumption is that everyone already knows how to create and deliver a speech and is ready to work on more advanced skills. Students who take this class are expected already know how to-

- find, use, and cite evidence to support ideas
- decide what ideas to include in a speech
- arrange those ideas effectively, while using previews, transitions and signposts
- relate the ideas directly to the audience
- employ language to make ideas meaningful and interesting
- construct clear and effective introductions and conclusions
- use a delivery style that is vigorous, varied, and vivid

All of that is important in this class, but we won't spend time working on it. If you do not know how to do all that already you might not be ready for this class. If you need a refresher you should probably get a public speaking text from the library or the bookstore and review it early in the semester.

Course Calendar



Schedule

Date	Reading Due	HW Due	Discussion Topic (subject to change)	<i>in-class</i> <i>(tentative)</i>
Tu, 09/01	none	none	Course introduction, syllabus overview	attendance & enrollment issues
Th, 09/03	none	none	deliberation	Film: <i>Lord of the Flies</i>
Tu, 09/08	none	none		[continued, maybe]
Th, 09/10	Chapter 1	Ch. 1 Reading Reaction		
Tu, 09/15	Chapter 2	Ch. 2 Reading Reaction		
Th, 09/17	none	none		
Tu, 09/22	Chapter 3	Ch. 3 Reading Reaction	mass media in society & politics	TV: <i>The Daily Show</i> + <i>West Wing</i> "Isaac & Ishmael"
Th, 09/24	none	none	mass media in society & politics	Film Clip: <i>All the President's Men</i>
Tu, 09/29	none	none	mass media in society & politics	Video: <i>Constructing Public Opinion</i> Read Aloud: <i>Art of Fact</i>
Th, 10/01	==>	Be prepared for NIF Town Hall #1		NIF Forum
Tu, 10/06	Chapter 4	Ch. 4 Reading Reaction	elections & campaigns	Video: <i>The Living Room Campaign</i> {?} Film Clips: <i>Primary Colors</i> + <i>1984</i> + <i>The Front</i> Read Aloud: <i>1984</i> excerpt TV: <i>Twilight Zone</i> "The Monsters Are Due on Maple"

				Street"
Th, 10/08	none	none	elections & campaigns	[continued]
Tu, 10/13	none	none	Fall Recess	no class
Th, 10/15	none	none	elections & campaigns	
Tu, 10/20	Chapter 5	Ch. 5 Reading Reaction		Film Clip: <i>Mr. Smith Goes to Washington</i> {?} TV: <i>West Wing</i> "Mr. Willis of Ohio" + "The Stockhouse Filibuster"
Th, 10/22	none	none		
Tu, 10/27	Chapter 6	Ch. 6 Reading Reaction	courts & juries	Film: <i>12 Angry Men</i>
Th, 10/29	none	none	courts & juries	[continued]
Tu, 11/03	==>	Be prepared for NIF Town Hall #2		NIF Forum
Th, 11/05	Chapter 7	Ch. 7 Reading Reaction		TV Clip: <i>West Wing</i> "The Crackpots & These Women" Film Clips: <i>Dante's Peak</i> + <i>The Christmas Gift</i>
Tu, 11/10	none	none	Class Cancelled (Dr K @ N'tnl Comm Assoc conference)	no class
Th, 11/12	Chapter 8	Ch. 8 Reading Reaction	Class Cancelled (Dr K @ N'tnl Comm Assoc conference)	no class
Tu, 11/17	none	none	New York State Politics	guest speaker.
Th, 11/19	Chapter 9	Ch. 9 Reading Reaction	international relations	Film: <i>Battle in Seattle</i>
Tu, 11/24	none	none Suggested: Turn in Research Q. Paper today to make the	international relations	[continued]

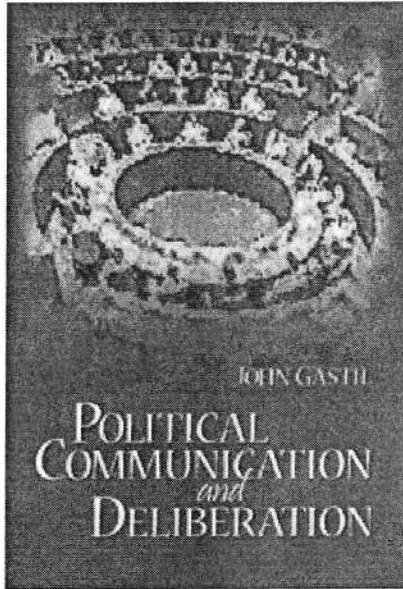
		finals crunch easier on you.		
Th, 11/26	none	none	Thanksgiving	no class
Tu, 12/01	Chapter 10	Ch. 10 Reading Reaction	wrap-up & mock trial prep	
Th, 12/03	==>	Be prepared for the mock trial simulations	Press conference	Mock Trial
Tu, 12/08	==>	Be prepared for the mock trial simulations	Attorney arguments	Mock Trial
Th, 12/10	==>	Be prepared for the mock trial simulations	Jury deliberations & news reports	Mock Trial

Tuesday, December 15th @ 12:30-2:30: Be prepared for the **mock trial** simulations (Comedy Central sketch, verdict, sentencing), last day to hand in **Research Q. Paper**

Required Materials



Textbook



Political Communication & Deliberation

By: John Gastil

2008, Sage.



Recommended Supplies

- A notebook
- Index cards
- Computer access

Reading



Responsibilities and rationales

In my opinion, and probably yours too, there is nothing more boring than a class in which the instructor just reads out loud from the text or does nothing but repeat material that is just as easily provided in the text.

I try really hard not to do that.

But for me to not spend class time having you write down the same information that is already written down in the textbook you paid good money for, we have to work together.

If you have questions about the readings, I'm happy to answer them and to go over material you might have had trouble understanding. Otherwise, I would much rather ask you questions about the readings and give you chances to apply that knowledge you gained from doing the reading or to challenge the information the text provides.

Doing the readings helps you to get better grades. Plus, we can have more interactive classes, tune in to more media (like movies, TV shows, and music!), and even play some games.



Reading Reactions

For each chapter, you will post a 1-2 paragraph response to what you read on "**Reading Reactions**" board on Blackboard. These posts are due by class time on the day the reading is due. Each week/chapter has its own discussion board forum set up where you will post your responses, or Reading Reactions.

These responses will not be reading summaries, but will be thoughtful, well-articulated critiques, questions, or applications of the information. Through these responses, you will be expected to keep up with course material in a timely manner and will need to internalize material, not just memorize or "regurgitate" it. Reactions can be points of agreement or disagreement with the readings, connections between the reading and current events or other classes, questions about the reading, applications of the information to your own lives, things you found interesting, etcetera. They will not be statements of how boring you found the author or summaries of the chapters.

These reactions replace exams in this course by showing me that you've done the reading and indicating areas of confusion or interest that deserve extra attention in class. They also help you to better manage your time in relation to course assignments and to maximize your in-class experience by being prepared to participate in discussions or to apply knowledge in unique ways.

Each post is worth 2 points, for a total of 20 points (or 20%) of your grade. Full credit is awarded for timely, thoughtful, and careful completion. Use good writing skills! Points are

deducted for lateness, vagueness, incompleteness, or excessive grammatical &/or spelling errors.

Everyone is encouraged to read one another's posts and to engage in dialogue both in class and on the forums (*there may be extra credit in doing that!*) Be polite.

If you need help figuring out how to use these boards for posting your Reading Reactions, you can find a **guide** in the "**Help with Blackboard**" page.



Reading Schedule

Chapters and Reading Reactions *are due on* the day indicated.

Thursday, Sept. 10	Chapter 1
Tuesday, Sept. 15	Chapter 2
Tuesday, Sept. 22	Chapter 3
<i>Thursday, Oct. 1</i>	NIF #1 Materials -No Reactions due on this reading, see NIF #1 for more info.
Tuesday, Oct. 6	Chapter 4
Tuesday, Oct. 20	Chapter 5
Tuesday, Oct. 27	Chapter 6
<i>Tuesday, Nov. 3</i>	NIF #2 Materials -No Reactions due on this reading, see NIF #2 for more info.
Thursday, Nov. 5	Chapter 7
Thursday, Nov. 12	Chapter 8
Thursday, Nov. 19	Chapter 9
Tuesday, Dec. 1	Chapter 10

Grading



Grading Philosophy

Grades are earned by you, they are not awarded or deducted by me. You start this class and every assignment at "zero;" you should understand each grade as being a level of achievement, rather than a level of loss. (That is to say, don't ask "What did I lose points on?" instead ask "How could I have earned more points?")

When you get scores on assignments I'm not *giving* you a grade, you're earning it. Part of my job, and part of what you're paying for, is an honest evaluation of what you do. Sometimes you may not like what you hear, and I'll try to tell you how well you did in the most positive way I can think of, but you can't improve unless you know what mistakes you're making or what weaknesses you have as well as what you're doing well.

I prefer intrinsic motivations, and therefore, am frankly not a fan of giving a lot of graded assignments. I believe this extrinsic reward is too often the only motivation for students to complete assignments, which takes attention away from the ultimate goal of individual and community growth through learning. A college education should be viewed as a privilege and an opportunity to become informed and scholarly. However, for lack of a better system and a larger population recognizing that even non-graded assignments are important, grades will be assigned in this class.

Work that meets the minimum requirements of an assignment, is completed on time and displays average involvement with the course content is deserving of a 2.0. A 2.0 is a "satisfactory" grade that indicates the *minimum* has been achieved.

Higher grades are awarded to work that goes above and beyond the minimum standards to produce papers and presentations that reflect superior intellectual effort, excellence in critical analysis and overall creativity in the approach towards any given assignment. A 4.0 is attainable but will require much more than minimal effort.



Grading Breakdown

Your final course grade is a weighted percentage of all your work in this class (see below for how much each assignment is worth toward the final grade).

Grades *in this class* are divided as follows:

4.0 (A) = 96-100 %	3.7 (A-) = 91-95 %
3.3 (B+) = 86-90 %	3.0 (B) = 80-85 %
2.7 (B-) = 76-79 %	2.3 (C+) = 71-75 %
2.0 (C) = 67-70 %	1.7 (C-) = 61-66 %
1.3 (D+) = 57-60 %	1.0 (D) = 51-56 %

0.0 (F) = 0-50 %



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:

1. Wait at least 24 hours before deciding to seek reconsideration, but no longer than one week.
 2. Write a 1-2 page explanation of why the grade should be reconsidered, following the same guidelines for all written work, 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 student performance rests with the student.
 3. Resubmit the original work (complete with grade & comments) along with the rationale.
 4. Allow two weeks for reconsideration. *Be aware that in reconsidering a grade, I may find that it earned a lower grade than it originally received.*
 5. Accept the final decision, whether the grade stays the same, is raised, or lowered. *I will reconsider each assignment only once.*
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Academic Integrity (aka "cheating")

As stated in the Undergraduate Catalog, the following pledge is made on all academic work done by students at SUNY Potsdam. This pledge is regarded as an indication that you understand and have complied with the requirements and assignments as set forth by the course instructor and as stated in this Academic Honor Code.

"On my honor: I will not give nor receive any inappropriate assistance on any academic work in accordance with the SUNY Potsdam Academic Honor Code and the directions given to me by each course instructor."

To plagiarize is to pass off ideas or words of someone else as your own or to use created productions without crediting the source. It is literary and intellectual theft when you present work that someone else did as being new and original. If you aren't concerned by how much you personally lose by plagiarizing, consider how much it sucks when someone else takes credit for *your* idea or *your* effort, and remember that if you're tempted to deliberately plagiarize or simply do sloppy work.

For these reasons, you will be responsible for authenticating any assignment submitted in this course. If asked, you must be able to produce proof that the assignment you submitted is in fact your own work. Therefore, I recommend that you keep copies of all drafts of your work, make photocopies and/or careful notes of research materials, save drafts or versions of assignments under individual file names on computer disks, etc. (This is a good practice for any and all classes. Not only will it protect you should you ever be accused of

academic dishonesty, but it also protects you in instances of computer malfunctions, stolen bags, spilled coffee, and bad filing systems.) In addition to requiring a student to authenticate his/her work, I may employ other means of ascertaining the authenticity or originality of your assignments – such as engaging in internet searches, requiring students to explain their work and/or process orally, etc.

I have a zero tolerance policy on plagiarism. Any time you incorporate the words and/or ideas of another person into your work, whether from a book, a film, T.V., the Internet, or any other source, without giving their creator the credit, you have plagiarized. In the event of plagiarism on an assignment in this course you will A.) Definitely fail the assignment. B.) Possibly fail the course.

Other forms of dishonesty or cheating are also not tolerated and will result in a failure of the assignment and/or class. These include, but are not limited to: using non-sanctioned notes on an exam, using electronic devices to get answers for an exam, copying others' assignments, using work from "paper mills," turning in work from another class without seeking permission from me and the other instructor.... If you think you are engaging in questionable behavior, you probably are, so either don't do it or seek clarification.



Due Dates & Late Work

LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED except in extreme circumstances with documentation. (Note: Extreme circumstances are things like college sanctioned events, hospitalization, serious illness, religious observances, or death in the immediate family. They do not include events like hangovers, colds, roommate disputes, funerals, romantic troubles, vacations, weddings, various appointments, work conflicts, or exams and papers in other classes. Documentation must come from official sources like coaches, doctors, lawyers, or clergy. They are not notes from your parents.)

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

I don't like being rigid about deadlines but they are a fact of life and there's no good reason why this class should be any different. In the working world, lateness carries serious consequences – from having to make-up for missed time, to reduced pay, to termination. Besides, it's not fair to the people who made the effort to do the work on time to pretend the deadlines don't matter.

Assignments



Assignment Overview

Your final grade is out of 100 points. Each assignment is worth a certain number of points. See below for the overview. Click on the assignment for full details.

Reading Reactions = 20 points (10 reactions at 2 points each)

NIF Town Hall #1 = 10 points

NIF Town Hall #2 = 10 points

Mock Trial = 25 points

Research Question Paper = 10 points

Attendance = 25 points (1 point per class meeting)

Attendance Policy



Rationale

I know many students think mandatory attendance in college is a drag or is unfair. After all, you're paying for college so you should have the right to show up or not.

That's why I don't set a certain number of allowable or excusable absences.

But attendance is mandatory and it is a component of your grade in this class because this course is about political communication, deliberation, and participation. "The world is run by those who show up."

Attendance is mandatory and is graded in many classes for a variety of reasons, such as:

1. As instructors we are the sort-of "guardians" of your college education. We have a responsibility to maintain the integrity and reputation of SUNY Potsdam. If you want your diploma to mean anything to employers, to your families, or to you, we have to set standards - otherwise, you might as well buy a diploma through one of those Internet offers.
2. Showing up is a big part of most things in life - socializing, voting, working... you have to show up. School's no different. You may face employers who have even stricter attendance policies than your teachers have, so think of attendance policies as part of your career preparation while in college.
3. Your attendance impacts more than just you. Class dynamics and activities change drastically depending on the number of students in the room. When you sign up for the class, you are taking on a responsibility - to yourself, to your instructor, and to your classmates.
4. If you don't come to class, you're wasting a lot of money.
5. Signing up for a class is a sort of contract, like having a job.



Expectations

If you cannot be to (nearly) every class on time, then you should not take this class.

Regular, timely, attendance is expected. In-class work and assignments that are missed during an absence cannot be made up, except in extreme circumstances with documentation. (Note: Extreme circumstances are things like college sanctioned events, hospitalization, serious illness, religious observances, or death in the immediate family. They do not include events like hangovers, colds, roommate disputes, flues, funerals, romantic troubles, vacations, weddings, various appointments, work conflicts, or exams and papers in other classes. Documentation must come from official sources like coaches, doctors, lawyers, or clergy. They are not notes from your parents.)

If you feel that you have an important reason for missing or skipping all or

part of class, that is your choice to make. *Only you can weigh the costs and benefits of that decision and determine whether or not you are comfortable with the consequences. And only **you are responsible** for those consequences.*

In the case of prolonged absences from class of one week or more, you must notify me immediately in order to make arrangements. Consecutive absences of one week or more, without notice from you, will result in a failure.

Presentations or oral assignments must be delivered on the day assigned! There is not time in the semester to reschedule, and your classmates and I are counting on your contribution for the given day. *In extreme circumstances with documentation, alternative arrangements can be made, if and only if, I am **notified by phone message or in person prior to your presentation time.*** (Note: Extreme circumstances are things like college sanctioned events, hospitalization, serious illness, religious observances, or death in the immediate family. They do not include events like hangovers, colds, roommate disputes, funerals, romantic troubles, vacations, weddings, various appointments, work conflicts, or exams and papers in other classes.)



Late Arrivals

Late arrivals are frowned upon. But, hey, life happens. We all have bad days, and I would rather see you arrive late, with wet hair, mismatched shoes, and only a gum wrapper to write on than have you miss the class completely.

Frequent tardiness, however, is counterproductive and will be noted. In this case, you will be asked to either adjust your schedule so that you can be on time or to withdraw from the class. I don't like to be so harsh, especially knowing that sometimes jobs or even other classes can create timing issues for some students, but a lot of "housekeeping" is done at the start of each class meeting and regular tardiness, no matter how justifiable, creates many problems.

When you arrive late, please enter the classroom quietly at an appropriate moment, and take the first available seat. *Do not* make a lot of noise, *do not* interrupt to offer apologies, and *do not* intrude upon the entire class by searching for a seat you like or cutting across the front of the room. Being late is not an accomplishment that earns you a grand entrance and special attention.



Incompletes

Incompletes, or other arrangements for course completion, can be planned only in extreme circumstances with documentation. Extreme circumstances do not include events like hangovers, colds, roommate conflicts, flues, funerals, romantic troubles, vacations, weddings, various appointments, work conflicts, or exams and papers in other classes. They are things like hospitalization, serious illness, religious observances, death in the immediate family, or some other serious *emergency* so late in the semester

that there isn't time to make up what you miss. **If you have a substantial amount of work that you cannot finish, you should withdraw from the course, not seek an incomplete.**

Classroom Rules



Electronic Devices

All electronic devices must be turned off and put away, out of sight, prior to the start of class.

If you can't make it through one class meeting without being "wired" then you should not be in the class.

If there is some medical reason for leaving a pager or cell phone on, make sure it is on vibrate and in your pocket.

I will not tolerate phone calls, text messaging, gaming, or the use of personal entertainment media during class. Leave the class to do these things! Not only is the use of these devices rude to the instructor, distracting to your classmates, interfering with your learning, but it is also inconsiderate to those around you who may not have the resources to multitask with gadgets in a similar fashion.

Recording the class without all involved parties giving permission may have legal ramifications for you, so don't do it.

Five points will be deducted from your final grade for each instance you violate this code. In the grand scheme of life, our class meetings are not that long, so there should be no need to break the code.



Attitude

Your enthusiasm and a positive attitude will not only make the semester more enjoyable for me and for your fellow classmates, but for you, too, and it will help you to do better in the course. If you have no enthusiasm for the course, fake it. You might just trick yourself into feeling it for real.

Smile. Participate. Attack the work in this course as if it were important to you and your life – because it is.



Etiquette & Behavior

The success of this course is directly related to the sense of community that we will develop in this classroom. Participation is essential to this process. I encourage you to share your views and listen to those of others. Debate and discussion are an important part of the learning process. While there will no doubt be disagreements, I expect the members of this community (including myself) to challenge ideas in a manner that reflects respect and recognition of opposing viewpoints without attacking individuals.

Though I do not have a problem with the use of curse words in the classroom, I ask that you be considerate and judicious in your use of them. Occasional

use is one thing. Relying on curse words to express yourself is an indication of a small vocabulary, a disregard for the feelings of others, and perhaps a small mind. And though I do not mind you swearing in front of me, swearing at me will never have a good outcome for you and I reserve the right to determine what that outcome will be as I see fit.

In most circumstances, I should not see curse words in your written work. That forum is not the appropriate place for such language use; the English language has many rich alternatives for expression. Swearing in written assignments where better alternatives are available will negatively affect your grade.



Disruptions

I will never stop anyone from answering the calls of nature – whether for thirst, hunger, or other needs. If you are uncomfortable, you will not be able to focus. However, **do not be disruptive**. You will not see me leaving the classroom on a regular basis to use the bathroom, nor will you see me crunching on a bag of chips or chewing on a Big Mac. If I can survive through the class, you probably can, too. (If you have so little time during the day that you need to regularly use this class for a bathroom break or meal hour, then you should consider cutting something from your schedule. At the very least, discuss extenuating circumstances with me.)

Do not pack up before I dismiss you. You never know when I may say something important or give a last minute assignment. You're going to want to have that pen and paper handy. Besides, it's just never a good idea to be rude to the teacher.

NIF Town Hall #1 *materials*



Happening in Class on Thursday, Oct. 1!

What is an NIF Town Hall?

"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" (Patrick Scully, NIF Project Director).

In this class, we will use NIF publications and discussion questions to think about different kinds of problems. We won't focus on single issues, like drugs or the deficit. We will think about our political system itself.

"More and more people feel our politics does not work. They feel no one cares what they think. Many Americans feel that our system needs to be changed, But they do not know how to fix it" (Scully).

We will talk about different actions we can take. "These are called 'choices.' Some of these choices have been suggested before. More than once choice could be right. All are presented fairly" (Scully).

You will be asked to think through which choices are good or bad and to consider alternatives. This is political deliberation.

Read more about the [National Issues Forums](#) at their Website.



Town halls, or town meetings, typically have the purpose of moving toward a decision on a difficult issue. (You may have seen or heard news about the Town Hall Meetings being held over the summer for the Obama health care plan.)

We, the citizens, can work toward, and maybe even achieve, that purpose by engaging in a deliberative dialogue in which we:

- know the facts and how they affect the way the collective understands the options
- understand the pros and cons of each approach, or choice - the benefits, drawbacks, and trade-offs
- consider our own biases and deeper motivations to move beyond our "gut reactions" and recognize how our everyday values and lives influence the choices we make
- weigh carefully the views of others, appreciating the impact that various

- options have not only on ourselves but also on others, and also recognizing the values and experiences that are influencing their choices
 - seek common ground
-



Required Reading

What needs to be done to prepare for our NIF meetings?

NIF Town Hall #1 coincides with our readings and discussions about the role of the media in American politics and the media's impact on political deliberation. Therefore, we are going use the NIF on "News Media and Society: How to Restore the Public Trust."

- To prepare for discussions, read pages 2-29 in the **NIF Discussion Guide on "News Media and Society."**
 - [You may [click here](#) to access it.]

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

How will our NIF be graded?

Each NIF Town Hall is worth 10 points (or 10%) of your overall course grade.

2 points will be earned for remaining attentive, tuned in, and focused during the discussion.

5 points will be earned for making at least one contribution to the discussion; to help you, 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. *If you're really active in the discussion, you'll have a chance to earn extra points.*

2 points will be earned for careful and thoughtful completion of NIF questionnaires that you will fill out before and after the discussions.

1 point will be awarded for showing your fellow citizens (classmates) courtesy; paying attention to what they have to say, and respecting their opinions even if you disagree.

NIF Town Hall #2 *materials*



Happening in Class on Tuesday, Nov. 3 (Election Day)!

What is an NIF Town Hall?

"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" (Patrick Scully, NIF Project Director).

In this class, we will use NIF publications and discussion questions to think about different kinds of problems. We won't focus on single issues, like drugs or the deficit. We will think about our political system itself.

"More and more people feel our politics does not work. They feel no one cares what they think. Many Americans feel that our system needs to be changed, But they do not know how to fix it" (Scully).

We will talk about different actions we can take. "These are called 'choices.' Some of these choices have been suggested before. More than once choice could be right. All are presented fairly" (Scully).

You will be asked to think through which choices are good or bad and to consider alternatives. This is political deliberation.

Read more about the [National Issues Forums](#) at their Website.



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-



Required Reading

What needs to be done to prepare for our NIF meetings?

NIF Town Hall #2 takes place on Election Day 2009. For this reason, our topic is going to be "Democracy's Challenge: Reclaiming the Public Role."

- To prepare for discussions, read pages 2-23 in the **NIF Discussion Guide on "Democracy's Challenge."**
 - [You may [click here](#) to access it.]

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.

- You might also consider reading, or even printing, the **NIF's Brief on "Democracy's Challenge"** to help you prepare.
 - [You may [click here](#) to access it.]
-



Grading

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Mock Trial *info*



Purpose & Goals

In this simulation activity, you will take part in political communication and deliberation through a mock criminal trial, accompanied by a mock press conference, and mock media reports.

Each person will have a role in the simulation and each role comes with different deliberative duties. Through this exercise we will apply and practice ideals of common good, fairness, reason, and argumentation. We will be able to closely examine the practices of specific media outlets and will maybe be exposed to media sources to which we are not typically attentive. We will look at election campaign practices and discuss the history of the modern "mud slinging" campaign. And, we will have fun doing it all.

Our focus will be on the communication processes in and surrounding election campaigns and trials. We will not be focusing on law or legal procedure. No knowledge of civil or criminal law is necessary.



The Case



The Players



The Schedule



The Grading

The Case



Murder, he says!

The Victim: Rachel Jackson

The Accused: John Quincy Adams

The Plaintiff: Andrew Jackson

Rachel Jackson, wife of former President Andrew Jackson, died of heart failure brought on by the stress of intense criticism from the John Quincy Adams campaign during the 1828 Presidential election.

For our purposes, Andrew Jackson has filed charges against Adams, accusing him of responsibility in Rachel's death.

[Read the complete story here.](#)



Dirty Politics

"The 1828 presidential election, which pitted Major General Andrew Jackson against incumbent John Quincy Adams, has long been hailed as a watershed moment in American political history. It was the contest in which an unlettered, hot-tempered southwesetern frontiersman, trumpeted by his supporters as a genuine man of the people, soundly defeated a New England "aristocrat" whose education and political resume were as impressive as any ever seen in American public life. It was, many historians have argued, the country's first truly democratic presidential election. Lynn Hudson Parsons argues that it also established a pattern in which two nationally organized political parties would vie for power in virtually every state. During the election of 1828 voters were introduced to a host of novel campaign tactics, including co-ordinated media, get-out-the-vote efforts, fund-raising, organized rallies, opinion polling, campaign paraphernalia, ethnic voting blocs, 'opposition research,' and smear tactics.

The Adams-Jackson contest began a national debate that is eerily contemporary, pitting those whose cultural, social, and economic values were rooted in community action for the common good against those who believed the common good was best served by giving individuals as much freedom as possible to promote their own interests. It offers fresh and illuminating portraits of both Adams and Jackson and reveals how, despite their vastly different backgrounds, they had started out with many of the same values, admired one another, and had often been allies in common causes. Both were staunch nationalists, and both shared an aversion to organized parties and 'electioneering.'

But by 1828, caught up in a shifting political landscape, they were plunged into a competition that separated them decisively from the Founding Fathers' era and ushered in a style of politics that is still with us today.

(From *The Birth of Modern Politics* by Lynn Parsons)

The Players



The Judge



The Jurors



The Prosecuting Attorney(s)



The Defense Attorney(s)



Fox News



CNN



PBS



Comedy Central



Andrew Jackson / Jackson spokesperson



John Quincy Adams / Adams spokesperson

The Grading



Trial Rubric

The mock/simulation trial is worth 25 points (25%) of your grade. It will be graded on 5 components, each worth up to 5 points.

Each element will be graded on a scale of 1-5

- 1=Not at all
- 2=A little bit here and there.
- 3=Satisfactorily
- 4=Well done
- 5=Very impressive

~Did you demonstrate familiarity with the case and with your role in it?

~Was the style and content of your spoken remarks appropriate for the genre (whether it was a closing argument, a news report, a satire, etcetera)?

~Were your spoken remarks appropriate for your audience (whether it was the jury, the public, the media, the victim, etcetera)?

~Were you able to present the necessary information in a logical and articulate manner? (That is, was it easy to understand what you were trying to say?)

~Was your delivery compelling and appropriate for your role?

Research Q. Paper *info*



Description

This assignment is worth 10 (10%) points in your overall course grade.

The text you are reading for this class, John Gastil's book Political Communication and Deliberation, brings together numerous studies about political communication, political participation, media content, media usage, and political behavior in the United States. He provides you with a broad, yet fairly detailed, overview of the academic field of political communication and demonstrates its connection to the "real world."

This is different from many textbooks you read in college, such as intro books that provide magazine or MTV-style snapshots of lots of different things about a given subject, but don't necessarily make it clear what the source of all that information was (and don't always do real well applying it to everyday life. It's also a little different from other books you might read in upper-division courses, which are, themselves, single, extended research studies in a particular field; these tend to present only one person's work in a field.

I know the Gastil book isn't always a real lively read, but because it presents you with so many different findings and perspectives on the topic of political communication, I'd like you to work with that.

As said before, Gastil brings together and reports on numerous research projects about politics that other people have done. Your task is to think of a research project that you would be interested in. You don't have to actually do it, you just need to tell me your idea.

For this paper, you will consider what you have learned through reading Political Communication and Deliberation about the practices of politicians, the media, and citizens. Then think of something you are curious to know more about, or a question you have that Gastil did not address.

You will then write a research question of your own, providing as many details as you can about the people or institutions you would want to study, what communication behaviors you would focus on, how long the study would be, and where you would get the information or data from (such as news reports, speeches, surveys, polls, interviews, etcetera).



Tips for Developing a Research Question

A research question is a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied. For example, "Where do teenagers get their news about politics?"

As you develop your own research idea, consider the following, and address some or all of these questions in your paper:

- Based on what I learned in this class (and maybe others) what are the important issues, questions, or concerns in political communication and

deliberation?

- From my point of view, what areas need further exploration?
- Is there room for improvement or expansion in something that has already been studied?
- Is something a hot topic, or is an issue that "scholars" focus on becoming obsolete for your generation?
- Could my research question fill a gap? Lead to greater understanding?
- Could my idea have a significant impact on what people know about political communication and deliberation?
- Could my study help to improve the political communication process in the real world?

A strong research idea should pass the "so what" test. Think about the potential impact of the research you are proposing. What is the benefit of answering your research question? Who will it help (and how)? If you cannot make a definitive statement about the purpose of your research, it might not be useful.

A research question's focus should be narrow, not broad-based. For example, "What can be done to improve political participation?" is too large a question to answer. It would be better to begin with a more focused question such as, "What motivates political participation in college students?"

How do you develop a usable research question? Choose an appropriate topic or issue for research, one that actually can be researched. Determine what you already know about the topic, either through course work or your own lived experiences. Then list all of the questions that you'd like answered yourself – everything that you are curious about. Choose the best question – the one that is interesting, feasible, and significant.



Research Question Paper - SAMPLE

Click [here](#) to read a sample research question/proposal written by an undergraduate at Southern Illinois University.

This is a little more detailed/informed than your own papers will probably be, but it gives you an idea about the structure, tone, and contents of a well-developed research idea.



Grading

This paper will be graded using the following rubric. To earn the most points you can, make sure to use the information below to self-check your paper before handing it in.

- Is an appropriate research question for political communication, deliberation, or participation

0 1 2

- Demonstrates importance of or use for the research results

0 1 2

- Explains what the research would entail

0 1 2

- Shows familiarity with the research presented, at least, in the Gastil text

0 1 2

- Paper is well written – clearly organized, error-free, using Standard English

0 1 2

Please format your paper according to these guidelines:

- Double-spaced
 - 1-1.25" margins
 - 12-point Times New Roman or Courier font
 - Standard English usage
 - Black ink, white paper
 - APA or MLA citations for work you reference (paper should contain, at least, references to the Gastil book)
-

Paper is due by December 15th!
Suggested due date is November 24th.

College Electoral-Trivia Game (in class)



What it Is

To make paying attention to current events and readings more rewarding to you, we will play an ongoing in-class election-themed game in which two teams compete for electoral votes across the country by answering trivia questions about top political headlines and/or textbook material.

At the end of the semester, the winning team [candidate] will receive some sort of small prize (yet to be determined).

Everyone can earn extra credit points toward their final grades by answering questions correctly. Questions will rotate from person to person each class day, and correct responses will earn the answering person 1 point which will be added on to whatever the final course grade would otherwise have been.