

## COM339 Political Communication, Spring 2019

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**Class time:** M,W,F 12:40-1:30 in VanHoesen B216

### Catalog Description:

Use of communication theory and research to investigate the role of interpersonal and mass communication in the political process. Prerequisites: COM 100, POL 100. LASR.

### Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate professionalism in communication by
  - generating information and ideas appropriate for mass dissemination
  - exhibiting proficiency and ethics in oral and public discourse
  - scrutinizing ethical questions in relation to mass mediated messages
  - analyzing information sources, evidence, and rhetorical appeals.
- Recognize how the popular imagery of zombies has real origins in and effects on our political landscape and, especially, our political discourse

### Course Topics:

- ☒ Engagement & deliberation
- ☒ The horrors of politics.
- ☒ Political rhetoric, campaign speeches, and doomsday discourse.
- ☒ Political advertising and scary stuff.
- ☒ Political media and fake news that won't die.
- ☒ Political others, outsiders, and zombies at the gates.
- ☒ Activism and planning for the apocalypse.
- ☒ Political participation or brainless behaviors.

### Required Text and materials:

- All readings are in PDF files on Blackboard
- Notebook & pen/pencil – strongly recommended

### Assignments/Grade Distribution:

Total=100 points

- ☒ National Issue Forum Institute discussions (5 total, 9pts each) = 45pts
- ☒ Reading responses (20 total, 2 pts each) = 40pts
- ☒ DIY Zombified Message = 15pts

### Grading Breakdown:

98-105pts = A+    92-97pts = A    90-91pts = A-    88-89pts = B+    82-87pts = B    80-81pts = B-  
78-79pts = C+    72-77pts = C    70-71pts = C-    68-69pts = D+    62-67pts = D    60-61pts = D-    0-59pts = E

### Grade Policies:

If you find an error in grading, bring it to the instructor's attention immediately so it can be corrected. If you have a question about assignment feedback, exam answers, etcetera - ask. It will help you learn.

If you disagree with a grade earned, you can file a request for reconsideration no sooner than 24 hours after receiving the grade and no later than 1 week after receiving the grade. The original work with all evaluation forms should be re-submitted to the instructor along with a 500-1500 word explanation (typed, double-spaced, serif-font) of why you believe your work warrants reconsideration and a higher grade; it should be specific with arguments well supported, using all you have learned in class relevant to making your case. The instructor will reconsider your work within 2 weeks; any grade change at that time, including a lower one, will remain final.

Extra credit is never given on an individual basis, especially not at the end of the semester, but you can email the professor a picture of a zombie to earn a bonus point on your zombified message.

Late work is not acceptable. If you cannot physically be in class when written work is due, it should be submitted to the instructor via email by the time class starts (if you do not have a copy of the work on computer file, send a photograph or scan of it).

### **Attendance:**

Roll will be called at the start of each class meeting; please inform the instructor of your preferred name and pronouns if needed. Attendance is expected, necessary, and required, but not graded.

Absences on exam days for religious observances or college-sanctioned events must be discussed *in advance* for accommodations to be made.

Emergency absences on exam days require notification to the instructor at the earliest possible time *and* documentation (such as appointment cards or admissions forms for medical treatment) with work being completed *immediately* upon return to classes.

To show you are aware of the attendance policy, email the professor the name of your favorite movie at any point before the midterm to receive 2 bonus points on the reading responses.

### **Academic Integrity:**

It is expected that students will maintain the highest academic and ethical standards. The College is an academic community, which values academic integrity and takes seriously its responsibility for upholding academic honesty. All members of the academic community have an obligation to uphold high intellectual and ethical standards. The Academic Integrity Policy can be found in Chapter 340 of the College Handbook.

### **Accommodation of Disabilities:**

If you are a student with accessibility needs and wish to request accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services, located in Van Hoesen Hall, Room B-1, or call 607-753-2066 for an appointment. Information regarding your disability will be treated in a confidential manner. Because many accommodations require early planning, requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible.

### **Mental, Emotional, & Physical Wellbeing:**

Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance.

If symptoms are related to your course work, please speak with the instructor. If you have communication apprehension (also known as "stage fright") to a degree that can interfere with your success in a communication course that depends on public speaking, speak to the instructor *immediately* to learn management techniques and to discuss possible options to ensure you can complete the course.

If problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis are negatively impacting your mental health and/or interfering with your academic success, SUNY Cortland offers the following resources to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your personal or academic well-being.

- Counseling Center: Van Hoesen Hall, Room B-44 \* 607-753-4728
- Substance Abuse & Prevention Education Van Hoesen Hall, Room B-1 \* 607-753-2066
- Active Minds student club

If challenges securing food or housing are affecting your academic performance, or your emotional wellbeing, you are urged to contact the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs for support (607-753-4721).

### **Etiquette:**

- Communication involves speaking *and* listening (sending & receiving messages). Good communication requires participants to consider various ideas and be willing to be persuaded by others. In this class, we will all practice good communication skills by speaking and listening with respect to those around us. We will be open to opposing viewpoints, even if we are not always persuaded by them. We will make an effort to contribute to discussions and to ensure that others have opportunities to contribute to discussions. We will not use ad-hominem attacks (name calling) when we engage in arguments, nor will we use straw-man fallacies (off topic arguments) just to advance our own viewpoints.
- Recent research has suggested that we are not as good at multitasking as we think we are, so to succeed in this class and to help those around us succeed, we will minimize distractions by using technology only in ways that are directly related to coursework and goals. Devices will be silenced and put away when not being used for class purposes.
- We will not attend class under the influence of alcohol or other recreational substances. We will also minimize distractions such as late arrivals, early departures, food, drink, bathroom breaks, extraneous conversation, and packing up early before class is over; these not only break our own concentration but also disrupt those around us.
- We will come to class on time and prepared with whatever materials are expected of our roles. For the instructor that means, at minimum, lecture notes, related presentation aids, graded student work, the roster, and writing instruments. For the student, that means, at minimum, any relevant texts, work that needs to be submitted, paper, and a writing instrument.
- We will practice professional communication styles and habits. Emails will include formal salutations such as "Dear" or "Hello" and will be written in a way that are appropriate for acquiring and maintaining employment.
- Thank you for reading through the etiquette expectations for class. If you did this by the end of the first month of classes, email the professor a link to a funny animal video to receive 2 bonus points added to you NIFI grade.

### **Coursework Explained:**

#### Reading Responses

Reading is the most important work for this course. Reading will introduce you to the concepts, and the rhetorical styles, of numerous scholars – ensuring that you hear more than my voice in the course. Reading will prepare you for your time in class, making lectures and discussions easier to access and material easier to remember. Reading will give you things to ask and say, making class time more interactive and helping you to tailor the course to meet your own interests and goals.

To help you focus your reading, to encourage you to schedule enough time to give to the reading, and to get you prepared for class participation, you are asked to submit the following for each assigned chapter:

✓ **a key concept or point from the article:** what do you think is the big lesson or the take-away from the reading.

✓ **a personal perspective:** what did you find particularly interesting or thought-provoking, or what did you find disagreeable or confusing, or if you were leading the day's lesson, what would you want to focus on, or about what would you like to hear your classmates' thoughts, opinions, or experiences?

Each response is worth 2 points. This means, that if for some reason you don't get one or two completed, it won't have a big impact on your grade. But, if you skip these entirely, you're looking at a big grade drop. To receive credit for the assignment, **these items must be:**

- Put in your own words to demonstrate understanding
- Brought to class in hard copy (this gives you an easy reference for class discussion), unless you cannot be in class, then an emailed copy is acceptable

Most of the assigned readings in this class are scholarly journal articles. It is possible you haven't been asked to read many, or even any, of this format before. This guide can help if you're unfamiliar with the style.

### **HOW TO READ AND TAKE NOTES ON A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ARTICLE**

First, 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. In other words, they make arguments based on and supported by information – not just a personal opinion.

#### Steps to Read the Article

- Look at the structure of the article (most scientific articles follow the same specific format)
- 1. **Abstract** (summary of the whole article – not always present, but if there is one it lets you know what to read for)
- 2. **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)
- 3. **Methodology** (how they did the research. Ex: surveys, experiments, textual analysis...)
- 4. **Results** (what happened/what was observed)
- 5. **Discussion** (what the results mean)
- 6. **Conclusion** (what was learned)
- 7. **References** (whose research they referenced & built upon)
- Read the abstract and conclusion *first* (these have the main points)
- 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.)

#### How to Take Notes on the Article

- Pay attention to what each section is about. The Abstract, Discussion, and Conclusion sections usually have the most important information. (Skim the methods section; it's not critical to you right now.)
- Write summarizing notes for main points (in the margin, or on a separate piece of paper) Don't hesitate to look up words you don't know
- **You are strongly encouraged to take more notes on the article than you need for your reading response because these notes are likely to help you prepare for other class assignments**

### **Complete list of readings for the semester →**

- Giroux, H.A. (2010). Zombie politics and other late modern monstrosities in the age of disposability. *Policy Futures in Education* 1(8), 1-7.
- Nelson, J.S. (2005). Horror films face political evils in everyday life. *Political Communication* 22, 381-386.
- Koch, I. (2017). When politicians fail: Zombie democracy and the anthropology of actually existing politics. *The Sociological Review Monographs* 65(1), 105-120.
- Drezner, D.W. (2014). Metaphor of the living dead: Or, the effect of the zombie apocalypse on public policy discourse. *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 81(4), 825-849.
- Trent, J.S. & Friedenber, R.V. (2008). *Political campaign communication: Principles and*

- practices, 6th ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. Chapters 6 & 7.
- Gunn, J. (2004). The rhetoric of exorcism: George W. Bush and the return of demonology. *Western Journal of Communication* 68(1), 1-23.
- Casebeer, W.D. (2004). Knowing evil when you see it: Uses for the rhetoric of evil in international relations. *International Relations* 18(4), 441-451.
- Morrisette, J.J. (2014). Zombies, international relations, and the production of danger: Critical security studies versus the living dead. *Studies in Popular Culture* 36(2), 1-28.
- Hariman, R. (2008). Political parody and public culture. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94(3), 247-272.
- Wei, R. et al. (2011). Third-person effect and hostile media perception influences on voter attitudes toward polls in the 2008 U.S. presidential election. *International Journal of Public Opinion* 23(2), 169-190.
- Hochreither, R. & Waldhauser, C. (2014). Zombie politics: Evolutionary algorithms to counteract the spread of negative opinions. *arXiv:1401.6420v1*, 1-12.
- Hoegg, J. & Lewis, M.V. (2011). The impact of candidate appearance and advertising strategies on election results. *Journal of Marketing Research* XLVIII, 895-909.
- Richardson Jr., G.W. (2000). Pulp politics: Popular culture and political advertising. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3(4), 603-626.
- Anderson, K.V. (2011). "Rhymes with blunt": Pornification and U.S. political culture. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14(2), 327-368.
- Sparks, A. (2009). Minstrel politics or, "he speaks too well:" Rhetoric, race, and resistance in the 2008 presidential campaign. *Argumentation and Advocacy* 46, 21-38.
- Gries, L. (2015). Obama zombies and rhetorical (dis)identification in an era of dog whistle politics and political polarization. *ImageText: Interdisciplinary Comics Studies* 8(1).
- Evans, R.S. (2016). Men are from Mars, women are from Venus, and zombies are from... Feminist theories of international politics and zombies. *PS* (July), 554-557.
- Papastergiadis, N. (2009). Wog zombie: The de- and re- humanization of migrants, from mad dogs to cyborgs. *Cultural Studies Review* 15(2), 147-178.
- Stratton, J. The trouble with zombies: Bare life, muselmänner, and displaced people. *Somatechnics* 1(1), 188-208.
- Pokornowski, S. (2013). Insecure lives: Zombies, global health, and the totalitarianism of generalization. *Literature and Medicine* 31(2), 216-234.
- Fraustino, J.D. & Ma, L. (2015). CDC's use of social media and humor in a risk campaign – "Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 43(2), 222-241.
- Clark, L. S. (2016). Participant or zombie? Exploring the limits of the participatory politics framework through a failed youth participatory action project. *The Information Society* 32(5), 343-353.
- Little, B. (2013). Parties, causes and political power. *Soundings* (winter), 25-38.

#### NIFI Discussions:

For over 20 years, thousands of Americans have met annually through the National Issues Forums to discuss 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 NIFI publications and discussion questions to consider and reconsider the political system.

Purposes of this Assignment:

- Provide the opportunity to engage in actual political discourse
- Improve public speaking skills in a discipline-specific and "real-world" format
- Consider not only political concerns but also political remedies.
- Engage critically with course concepts

- Integrate course material with real life

In these ways, the NIFI discussions we hold fulfill the Communication and Media Studies department's student learning goal of demonstrating professionalism in communication by generating information and ideas appropriate for public consumption, behaving ethically as communicators, and analyzing information and appeals.

**To prepare for discussions**, you will use the associated NIFI issue guides available on Blackboard; find, read, and bring to class two related news articles (from reputable sources); outline, in writing, 3 key points/ideas/arguments you think are important for consideration, and bring it with you.

During discussions, you will practice good civic engagement by:

Being respectful to be all participants and all ideas

Listening to others and being open to the possibility of having your mind changed

Being efficient in your communication so that you express your thoughts while giving others a chance to express theirs.

#### **NIFI Grading Criteria**

-Being fully prepared to participate = 3 pts  
Bring the required preparation materials with you to class.

-Remain attentive, tuned in, and focused during the discussion = 3 pts  
You will demonstrate this by making notes on good points others make, ideas with which you want to disagree with, and things said that you hadn't thought of before, etc. These notes will be submitted at the end of class; they do not need to be detailed – do not let note-taking interfere with your participation. Take them so that they are useful to you *during* discussion.

-Make at least 1 contribution to the discussion = 1 pt

-Showing your fellow citizens (classmates) courtesy; paying attention to what they have to say, and respecting their opinions even if you disagree = 1 pt

-Thoughtful completion of NIF questionnaires administered after discussion = 1 pt

#### **Complete list of NIFI issue guides used this semester →**

- *News Media & Society: How to Restore the Public Trust* (non graded, for practice)
- *A House Divided: How Do We Get the Political System We Want? What Would Have to Give Up to Get it?*
- *What Should Go on the Internet? Privacy, Freedom, and Security Online*
- *Coming to America: Who Should We Welcome, What Should We Do?*
- *Infectious Disease Outbreaks: How Should We Keep Our Communities Safe?*
- *Political Fix: How Should We Get American Politics Back on Track?*

#### DIY Zombified Message:

By the end of the course, you should have a good understanding of different ways zombies act as political metaphors. Using this knowledge, you (alone or with 1-2 partners) will create your own zombified or undead persuasive appeal. It can be a radio or video spot, a Twitter account, a Facebook page, a speech, a pamphlet... or any other type of political communication format.

The first step will be to choose an issue that you think can be understood, interpreted, or satirized through zombies. This can be a campus issue, like parking, a cultural issue, like

technology use, or a political issue, like immigration. A list of POSSIBLE issue ideas is below, but it can be anything that you perceive as a genuine problem or concern:

- Campus/college: parking, dining, studying, economics
- Social/cultural: technology use/abuse, distracted driving, drug and alcohol use, diversity
- Political: violence, immigration, voting, civic engagement, consumerism, capitalism, poverty, homelessness, gun control, The Wall, Donald Trump, Nancy Pelosi
- The next step will be developing a message, using zombies as a metaphor to help illustrate the problem. (Like how zombies attacking a shopping mall in Day of the Dead condemns consumer culture.) You can make the zombies the good guys or the bad guys. You can be funny or serious or horrific.

Whatever medium you choose- sound, video, social media, print, speech, etc – you will develop a full message that will be shown to the class during the final exam time.

You will also submit a short paper explaining what zombies represent in your message (how the metaphor works), what audience your message is intended for and how your medium selection is important to the message and audience (in other words, if you made a Twitter account instead of a YouTube ad, why? How does it impact the nature and reach of the message?) You will also provide the make-your-own grading criterium (see rubric below).

The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate that you understand zombie politics and the zombie metaphor and to demonstrate professionalism in communication by generating information and ideas appropriate for mass dissemination

**DIY Zombified Message Grading Criteria**

Logic or clarity of zombie metaphor, as explained in the paper	= 3pts
Logic or clarity of medium choice, as explained in the paper.	= 3pts
Clarity of message as presented.	= 3pts
Professionalism of message presentation.	= 3pts
_____ (write your own)	= 3pts
ex: Creativity of presentation. Awesomeness of CGI in video. Use of sound. Etc.	

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
	<b>1/28:</b> Syllabus overview	<b>1/30:</b> opening game	<b>2/1:</b> braaaaaaiinnnnnss
<i>Discourse</i>	<b>2/4:</b> Public sphere	<b>2/6:</b> Engagement	<b>2/8:</b> practice NIFI
<i>Horror</i>	<b>2/11:</b> <u>Read “Modern Monstrosities” &amp; “Horror Films” for today. (2 reading resps due)</u>	<b>2/13:</b> <u>Read “Zombie Democracy” and “Metaphor” for today. (2 reading resps due)</u>	<b>2/15:</b> <u>NIFI discussion. Prepare according to directions in syllabus. – “House Divided”</u>
<i>Rhetoric</i>	<b>2/18:</b> <u>Read Trent ch. 6 for today. (NO reading response due)</u>	<b>2/20:</b> <u>Read Trent ch. 7 for today. (NO reading response due)</u>	<b>2/22:</b> Political speechmaking game
<i>Rhetoric</i>	<b>2/25:</b> <u>Read “Demonology” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>2/27:</b> <u>Read “Rhetoric of Evil” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>3/1:</b> <u>Read “Zombies and IR” [pp 1-21] for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>
<i>Media</i>	<b>3/4:</b> <u>Read “Parody” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>3/6:</b> <u>Read “Polls” &amp; “Negative Opinions” for today. (2 reading resps due)</u>	<b>3/8:</b> <u>NIFI discussion. Prepare according to directions in syllabus. – “Internet”</u>
<i>Media</i>	<b>3/11:</b> All the President’s Men The Insider	<b>3/13:</b> All the President’s Men The Insider	<b>3/15:</b> All the President’s Men The Insider
	<b>3/18:</b> SPRING BREAK	<b>3/20:</b> SPRING BREAK	<b>3/22:</b> SPRING BREAK
<i>Ads</i>	<b>3/25:</b> <u>Read “Advertising” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>3/27:</b> <u>Read “Pulp Politics” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>3/29:</b> Ad examples (multimedia demo)
<i>Others</i>	<b>4/1:</b> <u>Read “Pornification” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>4/3:</b> <u>Read “Race” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>4/5:</b> <u>Read “Obama Zombies” &amp; “Men Are” for today. (2 reading resps due)</u>
	<b>4/8:</b> discuss zombified project	<b>4/10:</b> class canceled (Dr. Knopf @ ECA conference) – see Bb for extra credit	<b>4/12:</b> class canceled (Dr. Knopf @ ECA conference) – see Bb for extra credit activities
<i>Others</i>	<b>4/15:</b> <u>Read “Wog Zombie” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>4/17:</b> Guest speaker	<b>4/19:</b> <u>Read “Displaced People” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>
<i>Activism</i>	<b>4/22:</b> <u>NIFI discussion. Prepare according to directions in syllabus. – “Coming to...”</u>	<b>4/24:</b> <u>Read “Global Health” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>4/26:</b> <u>Read “CDC” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>
	<b>4/29:</b> NIFI discussion. Prepare according to directions in syllabus. – “Disease”	<b>5/1:</b> class canceled (Dr. Knopf @ UNT) – use time to work on final projects	<b>5/3:</b> class canceled (Dr. Knopf @ UNT) – use time to work on final projects
<i>Participation</i>	<b>5/6:</b> <u>Read “Participant or Zombie” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>5/8:</b> <u>Read “Parties” for today. (1 reading resp due)</u>	<b>5/10:</b> <u>NIFI discussion. Prepare according to directions in syllabus. – “Political Fix”</u>
			<b>5/16, 11-1:</b> Zombie msgs

Spring break lasts *only one week*. You are responsible for *all* the classes in the week prior to and following the scheduled break.

Finals week is a mandatory part of the course. Plan ahead and plan accordingly; travel arrangements need to accommodate, not conflict with, your finals week responsibilities.