

## TEXAS A &amp; M UNIVERSITY-COMMERCE

## COMMERCE CAMPUS

Department of Mass Media, Communication, &amp; Theatre

**Fall 2014**

Course Instructor: Stephen A. Furlich, Ph.D.

Course Title: Political Communication (On-Line)

SPC 414

Class Time: On-Line

E-Mail: Stephen.furlich@tamuc.edu

Office Hours: (Virtual through e-mail, ECollege) (Tues/Thurs. 8:00-9:30; 10:45-12:00; W. 2:00-3:00).

Office: PAC 120

Prerequisites: None

**IMPORTANT, PLEASE READ**

\*Please take the **Student Orientation Tutorial** before beginning the course. To do so please log into ECollege, then click in the upper left corner 'My Courses' then in the middle of the page under the heading 'my course list' and under 'special courses' click on the link under it labeled 'Student Orientation Tutorial.'

\* After signing into ECollege please click on the Help button on the top right side of the page to learn some navigation through the course with the links that to the side.

**Course Descriptions:** A focus of this course involves political communication in America. The aims of the course include gaining knowledge of several strands of literature in the field of American political communication, and becoming comfortable using this literature in a variety of ways, including: knowing basic theories, definitions, concepts; understanding research applications of theories and concepts; and finding broad applications of the literature to questions. American political actors and institutions will also be addressed. The course also looks at relevant media formats such as current trends and technology use. Applying political communication concepts, principles, strategies and techniques to your personal life.

**Required Textbook: Politics, Parties, and Elections in America, 7th Edition**

Brian F. Schaffner ISBN-10: 049589916X | ISBN-13: 9780495899167

Students **MUST** have access to the **INTERNET**.

**E-Mails: Label your Name, Class, and Section number, Examples: Smith, 414-01W, in e-mails such as in subject lines.**

### **Course Outcome Competencies**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Have an essential understanding of campaign communication, and the general role of the mass media in the democratic process.
2. Understand leadership in political campaigns.
3. Be able to recognize political communicative traits and tactics.
4. Learn concepts and skills for successful political campaigns.
5. Identify recent media trends
6. Investigate the nature of news
7. Identify the role of sources in the construction of the news
8. Understand the ways in which media shape public perceptions of the political world

**Attendance** - Punctual attendance is expected such as participation in discussions and completing assignments by the established deadlines.

**Assignments will be submitted electronically through ECollege and must be received by 5:00 P.M. Central Friday the week it is assigned.** This includes discussion postings. Please note the last week of class for Test 3. **Please do not send an e-mail asking if your paper was received until at least 1 week after it is due.** Answering e-mails about receiving the papers slows down the process of grading speeches. **An e-mail from the Instructor to ALL students will be sent AFTER ALL papers have been graded to notify the class that paper assignment grades have been posted.**

**Attendance** - Punctual attendance is expected at all class sessions, especially on weekly assignments and tests. Excessive absences are defined by the instructor missing a weekly assignment, excused or unexcused. If you participate in University sponsored activities (e.g., intercollegiate sports) you must check with the instructor with appropriate documentation before you are absent. Students are responsible for all missed work.

**Course Assignments/Assessments:** The department of Mass Media, Communication, & Theatre supports university policies of academic excellence as noted in the student handbook.

Interpretation of grades should be considered within the university framework: A=excellent, B=good; C=average; D=inferior; and F=failure. Final grades in this course will be based on:

**\* Tests - (70%)**

20% Test 1

25% Test 2

25% Test 3

Test questions will come from the assigned chapters as well as any notes sent out. Students must take the tests without any assistance from other people. They may use their textbooks but the tests will be timed. Academic integrity is described in the student handbook for Texas A&M University-Commerce. Failure to abide by the rules outline may result in failing the class. If a week has both a test and discussion in that week, the discussion will not be part of that test but will be covered on the next test. Due to multiple sections of this class taking similar tests, **test answers will not be given after the test as to correct and incorrect answers.** The students' scores will be the feedback that they receive concerning their test performance. **Students preparing for tests should study how concepts are related to each other, how they differ, and come up with personal examples of the concepts. The test questions are usually not straight forward definitions but often give an example and ask the student which concept the example best represents.**

**\*Please only submit written paper assignments as attachments in WORD. Other files such as PDF files are too difficult to grade.**

**Discussion- (10%)**

All discussions are finished by the Friday of the week they are assigned at 5:00 PM Central. A list of questions is given at the end of the syllabus for each section. The first student to post a comment or question for a section should consider addressing one of these questions. Students are required to **post 2 questions and respond to 2 other questions** that are posted each week. **Students need to come up with their own original questions to post and not re-post previous questions from other students or the syllabus. Likewise, students need to refrain from answering the same questions that other students previously fully answered.** Some repetition is acceptable if it helps to develop the ideas and concepts. The objective is to expand and apply the course material. Students cannot post questions or comments for any section except the present one. Hence, you need to stay on top of your participation for each section. **It is helpful for viewing in ECollege if students begin a new post with each of their original questions that they post rather than connected to a previous comment or posting more than one question together.**

**Papers (20%)** \*Internet web-site sources will not count as part of the required sources. Using books or journal articles are encouraged.

**Paper 1: Political Critique (10%):** Politics is often criticized within America by its citizens. This paper is intended to explore possible ways to improve American politics. Each student will first describe possible problem(s) of American politics. They will describe how these problems can be solved by using course material as support (book, notes, research). Each student **must identify at least 3 examples** of class material that supports their solution. Each paper must also have **at least 3 outside sources cited** throughout their paper. **Internet web-site sources will not count as part of the required 3 sources.** Using books and journal articles are encouraged. **Each student will submit their paper and reference page of 3 sources through ECollege for this class in Doc Sharing. Do not** submit it in the Drop Box. Papers need to follow APA format. Papers should be 1-2 pages not including reference page and title page. **Please bold within the paper the 3 supporting examples from class material.**

**Paper 2: Current Event (10%):** find a newspaper or news magazine article that relates to one or more of the general concepts addressed in class readings or notes. The student will summarize the story and explain how it relates to the concepts we are addressing in the course. Each student **must identify at least 3 examples** of class material about the event. Each paper must also have **at least 3 outside sources cited** throughout their paper. **Internet web-site sources will not count as part of the required 3 sources.** Using books and journal articles are encouraged. Each student will submit their paper and reference page through ECollege for this class in **Doc Sharing.** Do not submit the paper in Drop Box. Papers need to follow APA format. Papers should be 1-2 pages not including reference page and title page. **Please bold within the paper the 3 examples of class material related to the current event.**

### **\* Course Behaviors**

Students may lose 10% of their final grade or be dropped from the class for acting disrespectful the first time. This includes but is not limited to offensive comments to another student, etc. Students can receive an 'F' in the class for academic dishonesty. This includes but is not limited to cheating on tests, using previous work from another class for assignments, copying another's work from anywhere, etc.

### **Course Procedures**

**Assignments** - Assignments must be completed on time. Late work will result in loss of points. Academic integrity is expected on all course assignments and activities. Violations of academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, etc.) are serious offenses and will be dealt with according to university policy.

**Make-Up Assignments and Examinations** - If you miss an exam or presentation it must be for one of the following types of documentable reasons: death in the family, severe personal illness,

university sponsored activities, etc. If you have an unexcused absence on a day you are scheduled to make a presentation or take a test, you cannot make up that presentation or test. Additionally, because of time constraints, the instructor may elect not to grant make-up speeches for any reason. In order to take a make-up examination you must submit verifiable and official documentation to your instructor (e.g., a doctor's note for the specific day missed). If your request is approved, you may take a make-up test on the appointed day. All make-up exams must be given for qualified persons within 2 weeks of the missed test.

Observance of a Religious Holy Day – Texas House Bill 256 requires institutions of higher education to excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day. The student shall also be excused for time necessary to travel. An institution may not penalize the student for the absence and allows for the student to take an exam or complete an assignment from which the student is excused. No prior notification of the instructor is required.

#### *ADA Statement*

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

#### **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**

**Texas A&M University-Commerce**

**Gee Library 132**

**Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835**

**Fax (903) 468-8148**

[StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)

[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

**Dates are Monday of each week. Assignments start on Monday and end by Friday of each week.**

**Assignments due by Friday each week 5PM Central**

Week 1, August 25: DISCUSSION: Ch. 1; (Ch. 1 Article 1, Ch. 1 Article 2)

Week 2, September 1: DISCUSSION: Ch. 2; (Ch. 2 Article 1, Ch. 2 Article 2)

Week 3, September 8: DISCUSSION: Ch. 3; (Ch. 3 Article 1, Ch. 3 Article 2)

Week 4, September 15: Discussion: Ch. 4; (Ch. 4 Article 1, Ch. 4 Article 2)

**Week 5, September 22: Test 1: Ch. 1, 2, 3, 4 (Ch. 1 Article 1, 2; Ch. 2 Article 1, 2; Ch. 3 Article 1, 2; Ch. 4 Article 1, 2)**

**Week 6,  
September  
29**

**Paper 1 Due**

Week 7,  
October 6

DISCUSSION: Ch. 5; (Ch. 5 Article 1, Ch. 5 Article 2)

Week 8,  
October 13

DISCUSSION: Ch. 6; (Ch. 6 Article 1, Ch. 6 Article 2)

Week 9,  
October 20

Discussion: Ch. 7; (Ch. 7 Article 1, Ch. 7 Article 2)

**Week 10,  
October 27**

**Test 2 Ch. 5, 6, 7 (Ch. 5 Article 1, 2; Ch. 6 Article 1, 2; Ch. 7 Article 1, 2)**

**Week 11,  
Nov. 3**

**Paper 2 Due**

Week 12, Nov. 10	DISCUSSION: Ch. 8; (Ch. 8 Article 1, Ch. 8 Article 2)
Week 13, Nov. 17	DISCUSSION: Ch. 9; (Ch. 9 Article 1, Ch. 9 Article 2)
Week 14, Nov. 24	DISCUSSION: Ch. 10; (Ch. 10 Article 1, Ch. 10 Article 2)
Week 15, Dec. 1	<b>Test 3 Ch. 8, 9, 10; (Ch. 8 Article 1, 2; Ch. 9 Article 1, 2; Ch. 10 Article 1, 2)</b>

I'm looking forward to getting to know each one of you!

Have a great semester!

### Discussion Questions

**Week 1:** How important are political parties in America? How important are they with influencing your voting decisions? How has the political public sphere change over time? How is the Internet public sphere different from traditional ones? What is an ideal way to balance the paradox of political communication regarding citizens desiring information for voting but politicians often have an agenda with their communication?

**Week 2:** What role does the media have with polarizing political parties? What role does a third party have with political communication? Do they give a voice to less powerful citizens or are they a distraction? How much influence do online communication networks have with mobilizing voters (twitter, facebook, etc.)? What persuasive communication strategies are successful with political protests?

**Week 3:** How can political candidates communicate to both the general public and more extreme activists of their party to gain support from both? Why are negative advertisements effective during elections? Is there a way to better understand political speech associated with financial backing?

**Week 4:** What are some advantages/ disadvantages comparing different channels of communication (mail, twitter, facebook, email, phone call)? Many politicians claim that they do not make political decisions based upon polls. How true are these claims by politicians? Do polls represent likely voters' attitudes and should they be considered by politicians claiming to represent the public?

**Week 5: Test 1**

**Week 6: Paper 1 Due**

**Week 7:** What are some ways that political parties can communicate to enable likely voters to identify with them? Is there a link between attitudes on issues and party identification? What are the benefits/ disadvantages of using quantitative and qualitative methods to study political communication?

**Week 8:** Should Internet voting be used in elections, why or why not? Is there still a digital divide, why or why not? What are some ways for political parties/ candidates to build relationships online with likely voters?

**Week 9:** What are some communication messages/ strategies that President Obama used to get out a higher younger voter turnout? Are phone calls still effective in getting people to vote for them? What are some things to communicate to make emails effective for candidates to get voters to vote for them?

**Week 10: Test 2**

**Week 11: PAPER 2 Due**

**Week 12:** What political communication can be associated with charisma? What influence if any does the media have with likely voters' perception of candidates? What are some communication strategies that a candidate can use to get unlikely voters to vote?



**Week 13:** What are some ways a President can communicate leadership? What are some ways a President can communicate to effectively address conflict with Congress? How can a candidate communicate persuasively on youtube? What are some things to say and/ or not say in political advertisements on t.v.?

**Week 14:** What are some ways political parties can communicate to increase their credibility on topics? How persuasive is political persuasive rhetoric? How much does Internet communication form candidates resemble more traditional forms of communication?

**Week 15: TEST 3**