



COMS 414 – Political Communication COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2024

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Julie Grandjean, Ph.D.

Office Location: JOUR 126

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10 a.m. – 11 a.m., Tuesday 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., and by appointment.

University Email Address: Julie.Grandjean@tamuc.edu

Class time: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Class location: STC 123

COURSE INFORMATION

University Course Catalogue Description

The focus this semester is visual politics. Images are both ubiquitous and consequential in contemporary politics and their rise parallels the growing influence of images in society as icons of socio-political messaging, vessels of persuasive intent, and efficient carriers of social information for citizens of increasingly harried societies. From television coverage of campaigns and elections to visual memes and images of leaders circulated on social media, visual portrayals shape perceptions of the political world. When used strategically, visual portrayals hold the capacity to frame issues, candidates, and causes in a particular light and affect the acceptance or rejection of social policies. As representations of public opinion and leadership, political images influence issue understanding and motivate citizens to action.

Required Textbooks and Materials

1. Articles available on D2L.
2. Additionally, students should be able to use MyLeo D2L Brightspace, Microsoft Word, and PowerPoint.
 - a. All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements:

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- i. LMS Requirements:
 1. <https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>
 - ii. LMS Browser Support:
 1. https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm
 - iii. Zoom Video Conferencing Tool
 1. https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu
3. You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of the semester, students who successfully complete the course are expected to have:

- Developed an appreciation for modern campaign practices, especially political advertising, campaign communication, and visual media strategies—and their effects on audiences;
- Learned to critically analyze visual media practices considered problematic;
- Examined new developments at the media/politics interface, particularly the strategic use of imagery by political candidates on digital and social media;
- Understood a conceptual understanding of the effects of news visuals—of campaigns, elections, issues, and political leaders—on audiences as well as political processes; and,
- Read, critiqued, and applied major political communication concepts to research questions at the intersection of visual media and politics.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

As a student of this class, you should check TAMUC email account at least three times a week. You should also keep up with your grades on MyLeo DL2 Bright Space, submit assignments through MyLeo D2L.

I acknowledge that you are busy with other courses, work, and personal responsibilities. Still, I want you to succeed in this course, and being prepared is one key to success. I expect you to be proactive in your learning for this class. If you are having difficulties, **contact me as soon as possible**; I am always willing to help students succeed, but for that I need to be notified in a timely manner.

Furthermore, to understand the role of images in our private and social/societal lives, it is important to look at these images. Some of them will be hard to look at and study. If you need

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to cover your eyes or leave the room for a few minutes, you are welcome to do so, but I will not shy away from showing these images.

Finally, you are expected to **learn in public**. As Indigenous scholar Adrienne Keene (Cherokee) observes, “[consenting] to learn in public has meant a lot of growth, and a lot of mistakes. But I found my voice, and in the process learned how to apologize the right way, how to admit I was wrong, and how to move forward without feeling like a total failure. Which are life skills that go” beyond a class. As we learn about theories of mass communication this semester, you and I may make mistakes. With these mistakes, we can also learn to grow; and these are skills that will benefit you in the future.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENTS

For this class, you will be graded on various assignments. Be aware that the instructor reserves the right to have unannounced pop-quizzes to check whether you read the required readings.

Introduction email = 15 points
Syllabus quiz = 10 points
Attendance = 100 points
Participation = 100 points
Discussion boards = 140 points (10 points each)
Ad analysis = 150 points
Seminar facilitation = 150 points
Paper proposal = 300 points
Road map: 35

Note: Late work is not accepted, except in the case of documented sickness, or major life events.

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 900 – 1,000 points
B = 800 – 899 points
C = 700 – 799 points
D = 600 – 699 points
F = 599 points or below

Note: Grades are not automatically rounded up. If you finish the course near the top of a grade range, I will consider your performance over the semester and decide if there is a compelling reason (i.e. exemplary participation in the classroom, always respecting deadlines, etc.) to round your grade up. If you find an error in your grade, contact me right away to let me know. Please know that it is inappropriate to contact me or your other instructors to ask to have your grade rounded up or to insist upon receiving a particular final grade.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your instructor via email (Julie.Grandjean@tamuc.edu).

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here: <https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. By coming to class, you will get a better understanding of the theories we are exploring, by having hands-on experience and discussions about them. However, I understand that we are all busy with work and that sometimes life happens. For this reason, you have a total of 3 unexcused absences for this semester. Excused absences can be added to these 3 unexcused absences.

Note: Three late arrivals (less than 15 minutes after the beginning of class) to class without an appropriate excuse count as an unexcused absence. A 15+ minute-delay to class counts as an unexcused absence.

Syllabus Change and Class Calendar

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

The class calendar is available at the bottom of this syllabus and at the bottom of the home page of our class (COMS 497 – Visual Communication) on D2L. This is the “official” calendar. Scheduled reading and assignment due dates may shift over the course of the semester; therefore, you should check the calendar often for updates.

E-mail Correspondence

Whenever possible, please meet with me during office hours (TBD) to discuss your questions and class work. I will answer questions via e-mail, usually within 48 hours. I will only respond to e-mails Monday through Friday before 5:00 pm. E-mails received Friday evening through Sunday and student holidays will be answered on the next working business day. Please note that sometimes emails get lost in the email abyss. So, if you do not hear back within the first 48 weekday hours please email me again.

I expected that your emails will include the following:

1. Subject: Label your Name, Class, and Section number. Example: Smith, 414-01W.
2. Appropriate salutation. Example: Hello Dr. Grandjean.
3. Formal style with minimum grammar, punctuation, or spelling errors.

UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

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University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

Students with Disabilities-- 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

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

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

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status.

Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have

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been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

A&M-Commerce and Artificial Intelligence

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Date	Topics and Assignments Note: All assignments are due on Fridays at 11:59 pm CST unless marked otherwise.
<p>Week 1 Jan. 11</p>	<p>Topic: Welcome and syllabus review</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be able to understand the course structure, major assignments, and how they will be assessed; <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction email (due 01/11) • Syllabus quiz (due 01/12)
<p>Week 2 Jan.16 - 18</p>	<p>Topic: Introduction to political communication</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orwell. <i>Politics and the English language</i> • Edelman. <i>The construction and uses of social problems</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion board (due 01/19)
<p>Week 3 Jan. 23 – 25</p>	<p>Topic: Introduction to visual communication</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior (2014). <i>Visual political knowledge</i> • Grabe et al. (2015). <i>Employing images to test knowledge gaps</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar facilitation (due 01/25): Messaris (1994). <i>Four aspects of visual literacy</i> • Discussion board (due 01/26)
<p>Week 4 Jan. 30 – Feb. 01</p>	<p>Topic: Visual perception and visual processing</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grabe & Bucy (2009). <i>Why visuals matter</i> • Barry (2005). <i>Perception theory</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar facilitation (due 02/01): Lotto (2017), <i>Making sense of the senses</i> • Discussion board (due 02/02)
<p>Week 5 Feb. 06 – 08</p>	<p>Topic: Visual political rhetoric</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hariman & Lucaites (2016). <i>Seeing society</i>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benjamin (1935). <i>The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seminar facilitation (due 02/08): Gries (2012), <i>Introduction</i> Discussion board (due 02/09)
<p>Week 6 Feb. 13 – 15</p>	<p>Topic: Political icons</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perlmutter Hariman & Lucaites <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seminar facilitation (due 02/15): Grandjean (2023), <i>The spectacle of flags</i> Discussion board (due 02/16)
<p>Week 7 Feb. 20 – 22</p>	<p>Topic: Analyzing visual ads - History and candidate video style</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kaids & Davidson (1986). <i>Elements of video style</i> West (2013). <i>Qualities of effective ads</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seminar facilitation (due 02/22): West (2013), <i>History of advertising</i> Discussion board (due 02/23)
<p>Week 8 Feb. 27 – 29</p>	<p>Topic: Analyzing visual ads - Emotional appeals</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newhagen & Reeves (1988). <i>Emotion and memory for negative ads</i> Brader (2006). <i>Emotional appeals in political ads</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seminar facilitation (due 02/29): Iedema (2001), <i>Analyzing film and television</i> (Handbook of visual analysis) Discussion board (due 03/01)
<p>Week 9 Mar. 05 – 07</p>	<p>Political ad analysis due 03/08</p>
<p>Spring Break Mar. 09 – 17</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES</p>
<p>Week 10 Mar. 19 – 21</p>	<p>Topic: Visual bias</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grabe (1996). <i>The matter of visual bias</i> Grabe & Bucy (2009). <i>Visual bias</i> <p>Assignments:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar facilitation (due 03/21): Bennet (2012), <i>Four information biases that matter</i> • Discussion board (due 03/22)
<p>Week 11 Mar. 26 – 28</p>	<p>Topic: Nonverbal politics</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bucy (2016). <i>The look of losing, then and now</i> • Gong & Bucy (2016). When style obscures substance <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar facilitation (due 03/28): Bucy & Gong (2018), <i>In/appropriate aggression in presidential debate</i> • Discussion board (due 03/29)
<p>Week 12 Apr. 02 - 04</p>	<p>Topic: First impressions in politics</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olivola & Todorov (2010). <i>Elected in 100 milliseconds</i> • Todorov et al. (2005). <i>Inferences of competence</i> • Benjamin & Shapiro (2009). <i>Thin slice Forecasts</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar facilitation (due 04/04): Grandjean, Hunter, & Bucy (2022), <i>Evaluating candidates fast and slow</i> • Discussion board (due 04/05)
<p>Week 13 Apr. 09 – 11</p>	<p>Topic: Visual framing 1</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De Vreese (2014). <i>Mediatization of news: The role of framing</i> • Grabe & Bucy (2011). <i>Understanding the Visual Framing Process</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar facilitation (due 04/11): Krause & Bucy (2018), <i>Interpreting Images of Fracking</i> • Discussion board (due 04/12)
<p>Week 14 Apr. 16 – 18</p>	<p>Topic: Visual framing 2</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dumitrescu & Bucy (2019). <i>Images of people in need</i> • Grandjean & Bucy (forthcoming). <i>Visually framing genocide</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar facilitation (due 04/18): • Discussion board (due 04/19)
<p>Week 15 Apr. 23 – 25</p>	<p>Topic: Visual framing 3</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geise & Baden (2015). <i>Putting the image back into the frame</i> • Dan (2018). <i>Integrative framing analysis for television news</i> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar facilitation (due 04/25): Coleman (2010). <i>Framing the pictures in our heads</i> • Discussion board (due 04/26)
<p>Week 16 Apr. 30 – May 02</p>	<p>Topic: Wrapping up</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadmap (due in class) • Discussion board (due 05/03)
<p>Finals' Week May 04 - 10</p>	<p>Final paper due 05/07</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual framing analysis OR • Nonverbal behavior in political debate

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