

CMN 4820: Political Communication (3 credits)

Spring 2018, Section 001

Coleman Hall 1721

T/TH 12:30-1:45

Instructor: Dr. Marita Gronnvoll

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 4:00-5:00; Wednesday, 1:00-3:00; Thursday 11:00-12:00; and by appointment

Catalog Description

This course examines the interactive role between public communication and politics. Students will study how communication is involved in the various aspects of campaigning for and fulfilling the duties of public office.

Course Overview

The purpose of this course is to explore various aspects of political communication in the United States. Our first topic will be presidential rhetoric and the rhetorical presidency. As we explore this topic, we will investigate the historical development of presidential communication and the major genres which help shape and structure that communication. Our second topic will be political campaigns and the evolution of the "long campaign," particularly its inescapable connection to mass media. Our third topic will be grassroots and resistance political communication. Here, our focus will be on the nontraditional approaches taken by ordinary citizens and citizen groups as they strive to have their voices heard and impact policy.

Objectives

- ✓ To understand the connection between rhetoric and the formation of the presidency
- ✓ To explore the evolution of American political communication
- ✓ To analyze some of the major rhetorical texts in political communication
- ✓ To compare and contrast the circulation of political power from "above" and "below"
- ✓ To apply class concepts to a major project involving analysis of political rhetoric

Readings

This is an upper-division class intended for experienced, serious students. There is a lot of reading assigned for this class, and I expect everyone to come to class everyday having completed their reading assignment. Being current on national politics is crucial to the success of this class, so not all of our readings will come from your textbooks. Therefore, I am requiring you to come to class having read, or at least browsed, the politics section of a major newspaper (not the DEN, not local

newspaper, not Yahoo News). Almost every newspaper is available online and accessible from campus free of charge.

I trust students who are qualified for this class to do their reading without my forcing you to, but depend upon your holding up your end of the bargain in insuring successful class discussion. Most classes will begin with a short writing assignment called “question of the day,” where you will apply the assigned reading to some current event. If you haven’t read or kept up with the news, you will not be able to participate. Therefore, if you don’t read, please don’t come to class. It’s a waste of your time, your fellow students’ time, and mine.

REQUIRED READING:

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*

Thomas Hollihan, *Uncivil Wars: Political Campaigns in the Media Age*, 2nd ed.

Other readings uploaded to D2L

Politics section of a high-quality daily newspaper

Class Climate

One of the topics people can have a strong opinion about is politics. That’s fine! Strong opinions are wonderful and, when expressed with respect and sensitivity, can result in stimulating class discussion. I ask all students to think about how best to frame their comments so as to promote respect and civility in the classroom. Always check your assumptions—not everyone has the same political beliefs or supports the same party/candidate. Constructive criticism and responses are welcome and expected. Disrespect of any kind that creates a hostile environment will not be tolerated. At the same time, don’t be overly sensitive. You do not have a constitutional right to not be offended.

Cell Phones, Text Messaging, and other Electronic Annoyances

Turn off cell phones, and put them away. Don’t text, don’t IM during class. It’s disrespectful, distracting, and extremely annoying. You may think you can multi-task but trust me, you can’t.

Disability Concerns

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 581-6583.

The Student Success Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test

taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302

E-mail Policy

Email is a crucial tool for us to be able to communicate regarding class activities. Thus, there are expectations we all need to adhere to.

- 1) It is a University requirement that you check your email EVERYDAY. This is the only way that I, and the University community, have to communicate with you outside of class. Missing an important class announcement because you failed to check your email is not an excuse for missing deadlines or changes in class activities or assignments.
- 2) Check your syllabus for answers to questions before you email me. If I do not respond to an email it is likely because the information you seek is on the syllabus.
- 3) Because professionalism is a quality that employers claim is often lacking in college graduates, we will use this class to hone and refine these qualities. I expect all electronic communication to be civil, courteous, and professional. I will not respond to emails that do not include an appropriate greeting with MY name (Dr. or Professor Gronnvoll, not Mrs., Miss, or Ms.) and a sign-off with YOUR name. An email is not the same as a text or a tweet so please don't treat it that way.

Attendance & Participation

Your presence, both physical and mental, is needed in order for this class to be successful. Not everyone will be equally vocal, but I expect everyone to at least make an effort at vocal participation. I also value active listening and urge you find a balance between commenting during class discussion, and actively listening to me and to each other. You begin to lose participation points by being habitually late and/or absent, by engaging in prohibited activities during class (e.g., texting, IM'ing or internet surfing, sleeping, doing homework for other classes, etc.), or never participating in class discussions.

Please note: participation points are given at my discretion and are not subject to dispute.

Inclement Weather

In the event of snow, please keep an eye out both for announcements of University closure, and emails from me. I will always come to campus if it is safe to do so. If you live away from campus, please use your judgment, and stay in touch with me.

Grade Disputes

There are times when students receive a grade that they genuinely believe to be in error and/or unfair. Should this occur, there is a strict procedure that must be followed. First, we will abide by the "24-hour rule." This means that after I've returned your assignment (NOT after the grade has been posted on D2L), you must reflect upon it for 24 hours before you attempt to e-mail me or talk

to me about your grade. Second, after 24 hours have passed, you must contact me to request an appointment to talk about your grade (don't make your argument in an e-mail; I want you to talk to me in person). Finally, you must meet with me with your argument for why you think your grade should be higher. Be specific in your argument if you want a fair hearing.

After one week all grades are final.

A Note About Grades: I realize that grades are a high priority for most students. Please be aware of where you stand throughout the semester. Do not wait until the last few days of the semester and then suddenly have a panic attack because your grade is not where you thought it would be. Once the semester is over, it's over, and no more points will be allotted. I will not accept appeals for more points, or to be "bumped up" to the next letter grade.

Grading scale and criteria

450-500 = A
400-449 = B
350-399 = C
300-349 = D
0-299 = F

Deadlines

Assignments are due on the date they're due, at the beginning of class, handed to me by you, printed off and stapled. I will not accept e-mail attachments, or work handed to me by a classmate unless you arrange it with me ahead of time and have a good reason for not following procedure. By the way, a malfunctioning printer or computer does not constitute a "good reason." Don't wait until the last minute to print off your assignment; printers break all the time, especially when assignments are due.

Academic Integrity

It is expected that all students have read and understood the University Student Conduct Code. If you have misplaced your copy, you can obtain one at <http://www.eiu.edu/~judicial/conductcode.pdf>. It is of utmost importance that you understand what is meant by cheating, facilitating academic dishonesty, fabrication, plagiarism, etc. It is also important for you to understand your rights should I, or any other instructor, accuse you of academic dishonesty. Every graded assignment, unless otherwise indicated, requires you to do original, independent, and creative work. In addition to copying someone else's words or ideas, reusing your own work from other courses is considered academic dishonesty. At various times in the semester, you will be asked to summarize the materials of others—if you are using more than 3 words of that text, they need to be in quotations marks and include the corresponding page number. Violation of the Code will result in swift and severe consequences—typically failure for both assignment and the course. All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs where they will become part of your permanent academic record. Cheating is just not worth it.

Assignments

Question of the day (15 @ 10 points ea. = 150 points): At the beginning of class, I will pose a question that asks you to connect some current political event to the reading for that day or that week. You will take 10 minutes to write a substantive response to the question. The question will help to spur our discussion for the day and to keep you current with your reading. Questions of the day assignments may not be made up for any reason.

Genre analysis (100 points): You will select a presidential speech that fits into one of the genres outlined in your text, and you will write a 5-7 page rhetorical analysis of that speech. Detailed information will be provided in class. This paper may be revised and resubmitted for a grade adjustment.

Citizen Activist Analysis (100 points for paper, 50 points for presentation): This 5-7 page research paper will examine a particular political case study of citizen activism or grassroots movement. Your research will center on the *rhetorical strategies* emerging from the issue, which may include the strategies used by the movement, and the rhetorical strategies used by those attempting to discredit the movement. Detailed information will be provided in class.

Class presentation: 50 points of your course paper will rest upon your presentation of your work to the class. Presentations are mandatory, and no final papers will be accepted without accompanying presentations. Presentations will be scheduled for the last week of class.

Active participation (100 points): Participation is crucial for this course. We cannot have a discussion if you are unprepared. In order to encourage preparation and participation, your grade is broken out in two phases.

Reading portfolio: There are 16 academic readings assigned in this class. You are required write a short summary for 10 of them. I will collect your portfolios at midterm, and at the end of the semester. These are graded all or nothing. You will receive credit if you have written a summary of the reading that shows that you actually read it (as opposed to copying the abstract, which would be plagiarism), and have not just parroted class discussion back to me. Each of these assignments are worth 5 points. Note: You can choose to write on all 16 readings for extra credit—it's up to you. Minimum: 50 points.

Discussion participation: You will earn credit in this area by coming to class, participating in the discussion, and practicing active listening. 50 points.

Class Schedule

Note: It is expected that you will read the assigned reading BEFORE coming to class for the day, that you will take appropriate notes, and that you will bring the readings with you to class so that we can discuss them fully. We may alter some of the readings as the semester progresses depending upon the needs of the class.

PCP: Presidents Creating the Presidency

UW: Uncivil Wars

D2L: Desire2Learn

UNIT #1: THE RHETORICAL PRESIDENCY

1/9: Course introduction

1/11: Politics and Communication

UW: Ch. 1

1/16: The Rhetorical Presidency

PCP: Ch. 1

1/18: Presidents and National Identity

D2L: Beasley

1/23: Inaugural Addresses

PCP: Ch. 2

1/25: Lincoln's Second Inaugural

D2L

1/30: State of the Union addresses

PCP: Ch. 6

2/1: Discuss State of the Union

2/6: Presidential eulogies

PCP: Ch. 4

2/8: Reagan, Clinton, Obama

D2L

UNIT #2: POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS IN THE MEDIA AGE

2/13: "The Long Campaign"

UW: Ch. 2

2/15: "Crafting Political Images"

UW: Ch. 4

2/20: News Media and Political Campaigns

UW: Ch. 5

2/22: Money and Politics

UW: Ch. 10

2/27: "Crisis in American Democracy"

UW: Ch. 12

Genre Paper Due

3/1: Film

3/6: Film

3/8: Discussion

3/12-3/16: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

UNIT #3: GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

3/20: "What is a Social Movement?"

D2L: Stewart, Smith, &
Denton

3/22: Civil rights/Civil disobedience

D2L: Berry

3/27: Black Lives Matter

D2L: Powell

3/29: BLM case study

4/3: #metoo

TBA

4/5: #me too case study

4/10: Conservative movements

D2L: Wideman

4/12: Conservative case study

4/17: Presentation

4/24: Presentation

4/26: Presentation

FINAL PAPER DUE WEDNESDAY, MAY 2, 2018, by 8:00 a.m.