

**JOMC 244**  
**Talk Politics: An Introduction to Political Communication**  
Fall 2016  
Monday and Wednesday, 9:30am – 10:45am

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**Hours:** 8:30am-9:30am, M/W and by appointment

This course provides a detailed overview of political communication in the United States. Our task is to analyze the actors, technologies, and forms of communication that together constitute public debate. We focus closely on the processes of political communication, with an eye to how the state, press, political parties, civil society organizations, social movements, campaigns, and the public interact to shape public life and produce political culture. We consider the social and technological contexts that shape the production, distribution, and reception of political communication. At the same time, we define ‘political communication’ broadly to encompass the vast range of symbolic political expression, from political advertisements to protest events.

We will use current events on the campaign trail to analyze the role of communication in the democratic process and the workings of the central institutions that organize political debate. Throughout the semester we will analyze campaigns and governance through the lens of the theories and concepts that we encounter in interdisciplinary readings that span the fields of communication, political science, and sociology. We will seek to evaluate and rework these theories through our close observation of electoral and governmental processes as they unfold.

The School of Media and Journalism’s accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: <http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps> Students taking this course will be able to think critically, creatively, and independently, learn how to conduct research and evaluate information, write correctly and clearly, and critically evaluate their own work and that of others.

### **Readings**

Readings for the class will be made available on Sakai. In addition there are two required books for the class:

Jeffrey Alexander. *The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2010.

John Sides and Henry Farrell. (Eds.) *The Science of Trump: Explaining the Rise of an Unlikely Candidate*, Amazon Kindle, 2016. Available online at: <http://amzn.to/2afw80o>

## **Grades**

Participation: 20%

Group Field Observations: 40%

Final Class Presentations and Paper: 40%

## **Course Requirements**

### *Participation*

This course is premised on active discussion and, despite its considerable size, is run as a quasi-seminar. This means we will talk about politics – a lot. You are expected to come to class having completed the readings and ready to discuss them. In addition, you are expected to be following the daily political media of whatever stripe.

Midway through, and at the end of the course, you will be responsible for writing a one-page memo stating and justifying the participation grade that you believe you earned during the course.

### *Group Field Observations*

Over the course of the semester, in groups you will conduct *two* field observations of election-related events that you will write up in the style of ethnographic field notes and also document through either photographs or videos produced on their own or through social media such as SnapChat, Instagram, or Twitter. We will talk more about this assignment in class, but these field observations can be conducted at *any election-related event*. Obviously, candidate rallies count, but also field canvasses, voter registration drives, party activities, or the work of various civil society organizations or movements that have some electoral dimension (i.e.: a protest event or a canvass), etc. I define ‘election-related’ broadly, but if you are in doubt, let me know. In general, your group should choose election events based on what you are interested in spending some time observing and writing about.

You will choose a common site to observe as a group, but you must write your own observation up (you can combine any multimedia you produce as part of your group project and include it in the notes as well.) You do not all have to visit your event on the same day (unless it is a one-time event which requires you to all attend at the same time). Field observations must be presented in written form, either in MS Word or as a series of posts on a blog such as Wordpress or Tumblr, or a social media platform that allows considerable text such as Instagram.

You must also present your multimedia documentary evidence to the class in a *combined* group presentation, which will be around 10 minutes.

### *Final Group Projects*

For your final class project, you will work in groups to craft a campaign plan for a real or hypothetical general election candidate of your choosing. This includes drawing on the resources and discussions of the class to state your broad strategy for your candidate, the goals, objectives, and audiences your group has for communications efforts across multiple media platforms, and designing media mock ups including images and content for your candidate, as well as talking points, press releases, field scripts, etc.

Broadly, your campaign plan should have the following elements:

- An account of your candidate's public image (a narration of their biography, history in public and personal life, etc.).
- A campaign strategy that outlines your plan to capture the 270 electoral votes necessary to win the presidency.
- The issues that your candidate will emphasize and run on, as well as broad messaging about the state of the nation and your candidate.
- A discussion of the electoral context your candidate faces (is her party in the White House? What issues are salient to voters? What does polling data say voters are concerned about?)
- The audiences you are trying to reach (which voters does your candidate need to reach to register, persuade, or turn out?) and how you will reach them (what types of audiences will you attempt to appeal to and on what platforms).
- The messages and images that you believe will be the most effective for your candidate in line with your electoral strategy. This entails knowing who your supporters are and how to mobilize them to volunteer, give money, and turn out to vote, and attempting to discern who are persuadable voters and how you are going to reach them.

You are not required to discuss every media channel in existence, but at a minimum you should incorporate at least three into your campaign plan (such as television, radio, digital advertising, field canvassing, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, or public relations efforts more broadly). Your candidate can be either of the two party's nominees, a third party nominee, or a candidate who ran during this cycle and did not win (I am also open to other ideas, propose them!)

Groups will present their candidates *three times* during the semester according to the schedule that we work out in class. On the day of the final you will be handing in a final paper. The best papers will not only excel in the areas detailed above, they will provide a clear rationale backed by research or evidence for why your group made the choices that it ultimately did.

*Students who were enrolled in 490 during Spring 2016:*

Since you have already run your own candidates, and to brilliant success, you will have an alternate project. This will entail a special election day social media monitoring activity conducted in conjunction with national media partners (details to follow), and a final presentation and written assignment that uses this experience to design a civic technology project that will strengthen the democratic process in some way.

### **Extra Credit Reading Group**

If you are interested or want extra credit, there will be a reading group that meets once a month throughout the semester for an hour or so. I'll spring for pizza depending on the time. To receive extra credit, you must attend all four sessions in September, October, November, and early December. Books will provide deep background reading on different aspects of this election. They are:

Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

Katherine Cramer Walsh, *The Politics of Resentment*

Sarah Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry*

Danielle Allen and Jennifer Light (Eds.), *From Voice to Influence: Understanding Citizenship in a Digital Age*

### **Resources**

Most of the readings for the class are on Sakai. As students, you have access to all of these resources. In addition, students should pay particular attention to sites that bridge social science and journalism. Here are a few of my favorites:

ESPN's 538: <http://fivethirtyeight.com/>

The Washington Post's *The Monkey Cage*:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/>

The New York Times's *Upshot*: <http://www.nytimes.com/upshot/>

Vox's *The Mischiefs of Faction*: <http://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction>

In addition, there are all sorts of amazing podcasts right now that bring social science perspectives to analysis of electoral politics, or that offer insider perspectives on the political process. If you have a favorite, share it!

### **Special Accommodations:**

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

## **Honor Code:**

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

## **Seeking Help:**

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

## **Diversity:**

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

## **Laptops**

It pains me to do this, perhaps because I believe we have agency over our psychological desires, but the persistent distraction of social media is just too much to bear. People's heads buried in their laptops simply diminishes classroom discussion, and is particularly rude during class presentations and guest speakers. Because of this, we all have to digital detox a bit, so no laptops or mobile phones in class. Don't worry, we will consume plenty of media in class.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Part One: How Did We Get Here?**

#### **Political Culture, Populism, Partisanship, Economics, and Race**

*Wednesday, August 24th*

Introduction to the course

*Monday, August 29th*

Michael Schudson, “America’s Ignorant Voters”

*Wednesday, August 31<sup>st</sup>*

Guest Speaker, Joe Cabosky, Assistant Professor, School of Media and Journalism

*Monday, September 5th*

Labor Day, no class

*Wednesday, September 7th*

Michael Kazin, “Democracy Betrayed and Redeemed: Populist Traditions in the United States”

*Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>*

Sean Wilentz, “The Mirage.” Available online at:

<https://newrepublic.com/article/96706/post-partisan-obama-progressives-washington>

*Wednesday, September 14th*

Katherine Cramer Walsh, “Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective.” Available online at:

<http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/schatzberg/ps919/Walsh2012.pdf>

*Monday, September 19<sup>th</sup>*

Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations.” Available online at:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*. Read pp: 1-11, and Chapter Two 25-49.

Available online at: <http://bit.ly/1rkQFE7>

## **Part Two: The Dynamics of the 2016 Cycle**

*All readings in: John Sides and Henry Farrell. (Eds.) The Science of Trump: Explaining the Rise of an Unlikely Candidate*

*Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>*

Sides and Tester, “What Political Science Can Teach us About the Rise of Trump”

Sides, “The Angry Voter”

Cramer, “The Politics of Government Resentment”

Tesler, "Riding the Anti-Immigrant Wave"  
Oliver and Rahn, "Authoritarians, or Populists?"

*Monday, September 26<sup>th</sup>*

Tesler, "Losing Latinos"  
Layman, "The Evangelical Vote"  
Cavaille, "Democrats Lost the White Working Class Long Ago"  
Bakker, Rooduijn, and Schumacher, "The Populist Personality"  
Miller, "A Taste for the Putin Style"

*Wednesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>*

Heersink and Jenkins, "The Republican Party Loses Control"  
Baylor, "The Possibility of GOP Realignment"  
Cain, "Even an Outsider Needs Insiders"  
Konitzer and Rothschild, "Who Speaks for Republicans?"  
Smeltz and Kafura, "A Party Out of Step"

*Monday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>*

Sides and Leetary, "The Media Giveth, and the Media Taketh Away"  
Wadsworth, "Since When is Religious Persecution Anti-American?"  
Deckman, "Women for Trump"  
Tesler, "Candidate of the Islamophobes"  
Denison, "The Appeal of Ethnic Resentment"  
Nteta and Schaffner, "Pining for a Whiter America"  
Markovitz, "The Problem with 'Telling it Like it Is'"  
Muddle, "The Elitist Populist"

## **Part Three: Contemporary Campaigning**

### **Rhetoric and Culture**

*Wednesday, October 5<sup>th</sup>*

Jeffrey Alexander, Preface, Prologue, and Chapter 1

*Monday, October 10<sup>th</sup>*

Guest speaker, to be announced

*Wednesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>*

Guest speaker, to be announced

*Monday, October 17<sup>th</sup>*

Jeffrey Alexander, Chapter 2 & Note on Concept and Method

*Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>*

Jeffrey Alexander, Chapters 5 & 6

### **Technology-intensive Campaigning**

*Monday, October 24<sup>th</sup>*

Daniel Kreiss, *Prototype Politics*, Chapter 1

*Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup>*

Daniel Kreiss, *Prototype Politics*, Chapter 6

Daniel Kreiss, "The Democratic Advantage in Digital, Data, and Analytics Isn't Going Away Easily." Available online at: <http://wapo.st/1XF1eiL>

Daniel Kreiss, "A Trump Campaign Will Only Increase Democrats' Advantage in Data and Analytics." Available online at: <http://wapo.st/1XF1eiL>

*Monday, October 31<sup>st</sup>*

Pew Research Center, "Candidates Differ In Their Use of Social Media to Connect with the Public," Available online at: <http://pewrsr.ch/2asgjVC>

*Wednesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Deen Freelon and David Karpf. "Of big birds and bayonets: hybrid Twitter interactivity in the 2012 Presidential debates."

### **Field Campaigning**

*Monday, November 7<sup>th</sup>*

Nielsen, *Ground Wars*, Chapter 3

### **Campaign Advertising**

*Wednesday, November 9<sup>th</sup>*

Travis N. Ridout, Michael Franz, Kenneth M. Goldstein, and William J. Feltus, (2012). "Separation by Television Program: Understanding the Targeting of Political Advertising

in Presidential Elections.” *Political Communication* 29(1): 1-23.

*Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup>*

Daniel Kreiss and Lisa Barnard, “A Research Agenda for the Effects of Online Political Advertising: Surveying Campaign Practice, 2000-2012.” (2013). *International Journal of Communication*.

### **Campaigns and the Press**

*Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup>*

Jay Rosen, “So I Will Attempt to Explain Why Trump’s Candidacy Has Been So Confounding to Our Political Press.” Available online at: <http://pressthink.org/2015/11/i-will-try-to-explain-why-the-trump-candidacy-has-been-so-confounding-to-our-political-press/#p20>

*Monday, November 21<sup>st</sup>*

Marcus Prior, “Media and Political Polarization”

*Wednesday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>*

No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday

*Monday, November 28<sup>th</sup>*

Sarah Sobieraj, “From Incivility to Outrage”

### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

*Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup>*

Nancy Rosenblum, “The Moral Distinctiveness of Party ID,” Available online at: <http://www.cato-unbound.org/2009/02/02/nancy-rosenblum/moral-distinctiveness-party-id>

*Monday, December 5<sup>th</sup>*

Daniel Kreiss, “The Problem of Citizens: E-Democracy for Actually Existing Democracy”

*Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>*

Danielle Allen, “A Connected Society”

Tali Mendleberg and John Oleske, "Race and Public Deliberation"

TBD

Final Papers