COM 4315--Political Communication

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Office Hours: I will be available by phone at the hours noted below. If you need to have a Zoom meeting, we can set that up. My office phone will transfer to my cell phone. If I am on another call, please leave a message. You can also contact me by e-mail or phone at any other time.
Tuesday: 10:00 AM to Noon & 1:00 to 2:00 PM
Thursday: 10:00 AM to Noon

Course Description: This course provides a general overview and introduction to the study of political communication. Focus is on the relationship between mass media and the political process, political campaigns, and political consultants.


Program Learning Outcomes:

- Students majoring in Communication Studies should display comprehension of major communication theories.
- Students majoring in Communication Studies will apply the major theories in the field to communicate effectively in a variety of settings.
- Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to use and demonstrate understanding of appropriate methodology in critical, humanistic, or social scientific paradigms in examining research questions in communication.
- Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to recognize the central role of diversity and freedom of expression in a global community.
- Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the constitutive nature of communication which includes forces that enable and constrain communication such as technology, ethics, and organizational life.
- Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to demonstrate oral and written competence in logical and critical thinking.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Students will recognize the central role of communication in politics.
- Students will recognize the central role of the mass media in modern politics.
- Students should display comprehension of major communication theories relevant to political communication.
- Students will apply the major theories in political communication to communicate effectively in a variety of settings.
• Students will be able to recognize the central role of freedom of expression and inquiry in a diverse and democratic society.
• Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of ethical principles in political communication.
• Students will be able to demonstrate competence in logical and critical thinking about political messages.

Course Adaptations: Students with documented disabilities who need course adaptations or accommodations need to make an appointment with your instructor as soon as possible.

Class Attendance and Excused Absence (SFA Policy 6.7)

Students are expected to attend all classes, laboratories, and other class-related activities on a regular and punctual basis. Attendance policies will be stated in the course syllabus. For those classes where attendance is a factor in the course grade, an accurate record of attendance will be maintained.

Late work: Student work that is turned in after the due date will not be accepted, unless the student has a valid excuse for not turning the work in on time. Valid excuses would include (but are not limited to) sickness, a death in the family, and family emergencies. "I just could not get it done," is not a valid excuse. If you have a question about the validity of your excuse, please talk to your instructor.

Student Academic Dishonesty (SFA Policy 4.1)

Abiding by university policy on academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members must promote the components of academic integrity in their instruction, and course syllabi are required to provide information about penalties for cheating and plagiarism, as well as the appeal process.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

• using or attempting to use unauthorized materials on any class assignment or exam;
• falsifying or inventing of any information, including citations, on an assignment;
• helping or attempting to help other student(s) in an act of cheating or plagiarism.

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were one’s own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
• submitting an assignment as one’s own work when it is at least partly the work of another person;
• submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source;
• incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper or presentation without giving the author credit.

Penalties for Academic Dishonesty

Penalties may include, but are not limited to, reprimand, no credit for the assignment or exam, resubmission of the work, make-up exam, failure of the course, or expulsion from the university.

Procedure for Addressing Student Academic Dishonesty

A faculty member who has evidence and/or suspects that academic dishonesty has occurred will gather all pertinent information and initiate the following procedure:

1. The faculty member will discuss all evidence of cheating or plagiarism directly with the student(s) involved.
2. After consideration of the explanation provided by the student(s), the faculty member will determine whether academic dishonesty has occurred. The faculty member may consult with the academic unit head and/or dean in making a decision.
3. After a determination of academic dishonesty, the faculty member will inform the academic unit head and submit a Report of Academic Dishonesty with supporting documentation to the office of the dean of the student’s major. This report will become part of the student's record and will remain on file with the dean’s office for at least four years even if the student withdraws prior to receiving a grade. For a serious first offense or subsequent offenses, the dean of the student’s major will determine a course of action, which may include dismissal from the university. The dean may refer the case to the college council for review and recommendations before making this determination.

A student’s record of academic dishonesty will not be available to faculty members. The purpose of the record is for the dean to track a pattern of academic dishonesty during a student’s academic career at Stephen F. Austin State University.

Student Appeals

A student who wishes to appeal decisions related to academic dishonesty should follow procedures outlined in Academic Appeals by Students (6.3).

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf
Course Grades, Withheld Grades (A-54)

At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic unit head, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F, except as allowed through policy [i.e., Active Military Service (6.14)]. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

See the full policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

Students with Disabilities

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.


Tests: There will be two (2) unit tests during the semester. Each test will consist of multiple choice and objective questions. Each test will be worth 100 points for a total of 200 points for the tests.

Semester Projects: You should choose and have your instructor approve one of the following projects to complete this semester. Some projects may be done by a group of two or three students, but your instructor must approve this arrangement. Your papers must be neatly typed in APA or MLA format with citations and references. Unless otherwise noted, your papers should be no more than 7 pages long. Please use a cover sheet with your name, e-mail address, phone number, course title and the title of your project. These projects are worth 100 points.

1. Write a literature review over some topic pertinent to the field of political communication. This paper should include a review of the major works in the area, an evaluation of the works, criticisms of the literature, and suggestions for further work in the topic area.
2. Do an analysis of a recent political campaign. In this project you should focus on strategies and styles used in the campaign. You should provide plenty of specific examples. Critique the effectiveness of the strategies used in the campaign.

3. Volunteer to work in a political campaign. You should keep very detailed records of everything that you experience. Make sure to learn all you can about the candidate you are working for and the campaign in which you are involved. Write a paper recounting your experiences and what you have learned. Also make sure that you analyze the campaign by applying information covered in this course, being sure to identifying strategies and tactics used. Make note of the strengths and weaknesses as well.

4. Design a political campaign. For this project you must choose a candidate for a specific office and design a campaign for that candidate. You will have to do research on the candidate and on the target audience. Develop an image for the candidate and determine what type of campaign strategy the candidate should use. You can develop newspaper ads, television ads, campaign buttons, posters, or whatever is needed to help with the campaign. You should write a paper justifying and explaining the image you have created (tell me why and how), how the candidate should use the media, what sort of issues the candidate should talk about (this must be supported by target audience research), costs for the campaign, and what strategies will be used in the campaign (tell me why and how).

5. Work with your instructor on a research project. For this project you will contract with your instructor to assist your instructor in an original political communication research project. This project will require you to meet with your instructor outside of class on a regular basis to consult about the project and your work on the project. Depending on your level of involvement in the project, you may be listed as a coauthor or contributor in any papers or publications that result from this project.

6. If none of the other project options appeal to you, you can design your own project. Your project must clearly apply to the content of the course. For this option, you will need to provide your instructor a clear description in writing of what
you would like to do in your project, and you will need to have a conference with your instructor to finalize and receive approval of the project.

Assignments and Discussions: There will be 15 assignments and discussion activities throughout the semester. These are identified on the course schedule and in each module. Each assignment and discussion board will be worth 10 points.

Learning the Material and Assessing Knowledge:

How do you learn the material for the course?

You will want to read each textbook chapter in addition to viewing/reading the materials provided under the content tab in D2L. These are called modules and they are the equivalent of an in-class lecture. Although there may be some similar material to the textbook, you may find testable information that is not covered in the textbook. It is important that you go through each of the module’s content pages before completing your assignments. I will also guide you to which assignments are associated with the content. All due dates however can be found on the Course Schedule.

How will your knowledge be evaluated?

There is a total of 550 possible points in this class. The due dates of tests, discussion posts, and the paper are listed in the Course Schedule and Timeline. Your final grade in this course is based on your cumulative point total (not percentage) and will be assessed as the following:

\[ A = 450-405, \quad B = 404-359, \quad C = 358-313, \quad D = 312-267, \quad F = 266-0 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignments</th>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities &amp; Discussion Posts (15 @ 10 pts ea.)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests (2 @ 100 pts ea.)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester Project</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Points</td>
<td>450</td>
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Below is a chart that offers a general overview of how these assignments will be graded. Look for further explanation for each assignment as you proceed through the modules.

**When preparing for tests**, make sure to read both the textbook chapters and the modules as information can and will come from both sources. The **tests** themselves will include questions that are **definition and content** based, as well as **more situation/application-based questions**.
### How will your knowledge be assessed?

#### General Assessment Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Activities</th>
<th>Full Credit</th>
<th>Partial Credit</th>
<th>No Credit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tests (3 total)</strong></td>
<td>100 points. You correctly answer all questions.</td>
<td>99-1 points. Points are earned for each correct answer.</td>
<td>0 points. You do not complete the quiz on time and/or there is evidence of working with another student.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion Posts and Activities (16 total)</strong></td>
<td>10 points. You provide meaningful posts and there is evidence of participation. You clearly integrate course material/knowledge into the discussion. You provide meaningful, completed assignments where you clearly demonstrate your knowledge of the course material.</td>
<td>9-1 points. Points are lost if your participation or content is not adequate, and/or you do not follow instructions. If you do not submit the assignment on time or follow instructions</td>
<td>0 points. There is no evidence of your participation in the discussion. If you do not submit your activity on time, you'll receive zero points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semester Project</strong></td>
<td>100 points. Your grade will depend on the timeliness of your submission and your ability to follow directions.</td>
<td>99-1 points. If your paper is submitted after the deadline and diverges from the paper requirements, you'll lose points.</td>
<td>0 points. If you do not submit your paper on time or your paper is plagiarized, you'll receive zero points.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Discussion Board Rubric**

Below is a more specific explanation of what I'll be using to grade discussion board posts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality and Timeliness</strong></td>
<td>2.5 points. Submits one initial response early in the session and two or more thoughtful peer responses early in the session, and more than two peer responses closer to the end of the session.</td>
<td>2-1 points. Submits at least one initial response early in the session, and at least two peer responses closer to the end of the session.</td>
<td>.5-0 points. Does not submit at least one initial response early in the session and/or does not submit at least two peer responses closer to the end of the session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling and Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>2.5 points. Submits posts that contain grammatically correct sentences without any spelling errors.</td>
<td>2-1 points. Submits posts that have one or grammatically incorrect sentences and two spelling errors.</td>
<td>.5-0 points. Does not submit posts that are in complete sentences or two or more of the complete sentences are grammatically incorrect and have greater than 2 spelling errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrates Knowledge and Understanding of Content and Applicability to Professional Practice</strong></td>
<td>2.5 points. Posts and responses show evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content and applicability to professional practice and include other resources that extend the learning of the community.</td>
<td>2-1 points. Posts and responses show evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content and applicability to professional practice.</td>
<td>.5-0 points. Post and responses show little evidence of knowledge and understanding of course content and applicability of professional practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generates Learning Within the Community</strong></td>
<td>2.5 points. Posts elicit responses and reflections from other learners and responses build upon and integrate multiple views from other learners and take the discussion deeper.</td>
<td>2-1 points. Posts attempt to elicit responses and reflections from other learners and responses build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper.</td>
<td>.5-0 points. Posts do not attempt to elicit responses and reflections from other learners and/or responses do not build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>