

University of Western Ontario: Department of Political Science

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 4209G/9767B**

## **Political Strategy and Communication**

Winter 2023

Mondays 11:30-1:30, 7200 SSC

Course Director: Dr. Adam Harmes,

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### **Course Description**

This course provides an advanced introduction to some of the practical skills involved in political campaigns including lobbying/advocacy campaigns by businesses and NGOs and election campaigns. It focuses on developing specific skills related to strategy, tactics, and communications using case studies and practically oriented assignments.

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to: identify and apply key concepts related to political marketing; acquire and apply knowledge of political marketing research methods; and acquire and apply knowledge in various practically oriented media and communications skills

### **Course Structure**

The course consists of 13 sessions of approximately 2 hours each. Classes will be a mix of interactive lectures, class discussions focused on the readings assigned for each week, as well as classroom exercises. All lecture PPT materials will be posted a few days before the relevant classes so students can review them and use them to assist with note taking.

### **Required Readings**

All course readings are posted on the course OWL website in the 'Resources' folder and then the 'Readings' folder under their specific week. All readings in the folders are required readings.

Graduate students will also complete a book review assignment on one of the following 4 books which should be purchased through Amazon or Chapters as soon as possible:

Alex Marland. 2016. *Brand Command: Canadian Politics and Democracy in the Age of Message Control*. UBC Press.

Susan Delacourt. 2016. *Shopping for Votes: How politicians choose us and we choose them*. D & M Publishers, 2016.

Matt Price. 2017. *Engagement Organizing: The Old Art and New Science of Winning Campaigns*. UBC Press.

Darren Tromblay. 2018. *Political Influence Operations: How Foreign Actors Seek to Shape U.S. Policy Making*. Rowman & Littlefield.

### **Course Assignments**

#### Undergrad Students

Weekly Homework	20%	
One Topic Introduction	10%	
Seminar Participation	20%	
Midterm	25%	27 February in class
Final Online Exam	25%	Exam Period

#### Grad Students

Weekly Homework	20%	
Two Topic Introductions	10%	
Seminar Participation	15%	
Midterm	20%	27 February in class
Final Online Exam	20%	Exam Period
Book Review	15%	Friday 24 March 11:55 pm

### **Assignment Due Dates**

All assignments are due on OWL by 11:55 p.m. on the due date. After that, they will receive the late penalty designated for each assignment. All assignments must be submitted as PDF or Word files.

Sunday nights                      Weekly homework as per the course topic schedule below

The written portion of your Reading Introductions as per the assigned schedule posted on OWL

24 Mar (Friday)                      Grad Student Book Review due on OWL

9 Apl (Sunday)                      All weekly homework assignments submitted as a single document

### **Weekly Homework**

For every class (except the first class), students must complete the weekly homework assignment based on the readings. Most weeks they will be 1 page, typed, single-spaced in length in sentence format with your name typed at the top. Each week's homework is listed in the weekly course schedule below. The main purpose of the homework is to demonstrate that you have read and engaged with or applied key points from the weekly readings.

Weekly homework is due on OWL by 11:55 p.m. on the day before the class. After that, each late submission will drop the overall grade by 2/100. All homework must be submitted as PDF or Word files. The weekly homework must be saved and then submitted as a single document to turnitin.com through the course OWL site by 11:55 p.m. on the day before the last class.

Students will receive comments on their first weekly homework only to ensure they understand what is expected. Homework will be graded as a whole at the end of the term based on:

- the amount of detail included from the readings etc.
- strong use of relevant quotes and page citations (no bibliography is required)
- showing good understanding and/or application of the concepts
- don't overthink the homework: just answer the homework and show that you've done and engaged with the readings

### **Topic Introductions**

Each undergraduate student will write and present one 1 page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis of one of the assigned topic based on the readings. Each graduate student will write and present two 1 page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis of one of the assigned topic based on the readings.

Specific topics/dates will be assigned at random and a list will be posted on the OWL site one week before the first introductions at the end of January. Students can only swap introductions if they must miss the assigned class due to an accommodation.

In the seminar class, the student will introduce the reading in a 5 minute informal presentation based on their written analysis. These introductions will be verbal only (no PowerPoints or standing in front of the class). You will only be marked on content and NOT presentation style.

### **Seminar Participation**

Participation grades will be based on active participation in class discussions and exercises. For every class, your participation will be assessed as zero, low, medium, or high based on the quantity and quality of your contributions. These assessments will then be used to determine an overall participation mark relative to the rest of the students. Therefore, if your participation is average compared to the other students over the whole of the course, you will receive an overall participation grade of B+. If your participation is above or below the average compared to the other students, you will receive an overall participation of above or below B+. For example, perfect attendance with low participation will result in a low B grade. Attendance will be taken and participation marks will be deducted for any classed missed without a documented accommodation.

### **Mid-Term Exam**

The midterm exam will occur in-person during the scheduled class time. Students with a formal accommodation to write the exam separately and/or with longer time must register with Accessible Education as soon as possible. If you miss their registration deadline, you will have to write the exam with the rest of the class.

It will be a 1 hour exam with 50 multiple choice questions based on all the readings and PowerPoints before the midterm. A brief study guide with points of what to study and example questions will be posted one week before the midterm. If you keep up with the readings and PowerPoints, attend class, and make a decent effort at studying you will be well prepared.

### Accessibility Accommodations

- Students with a formal accommodation to write the exam separately and/or with longer time

etc. must be registered with Accessible Education.

- You will write the exam with them and not with the rest of the class. They will tell you where you write. If you have not heard from them, make sure you contact them.
- We are not able to provide extra time or other accommodations in the main exam.
- Having the ‘flexibility with assignment deadlines’ accommodation does not apply to the date you write the exam.

### Make-Up Exam

- All requests for medical or compassionate extensions must go through academic counseling only. The course instructor will not grant any extensions.
- Exams cannot be written early under any circumstances.
- If you miss the main exam without an accommodation, you will receive a grade of zero.
- The format for the make-up exam is exactly the same as for the main exam and it will cover the exact same material as the main exam and no more.
- Any make-up exam will be scheduled as soon as possible based on student and professor schedules.
- If you miss the make-up exam without a further accommodation, you will receive a grade of zero.
- If you miss the make-up exam with an accommodation, it will be replaced with a significant written assignment based on all the lectures and readings covered on the midterm.
- Under no circumstances will you be allowed to miss the midterm and have your other grades reweighted.

### **Final Online Exam**

This will be an open book, online exam held on a time and date to be determined by the Registrar’s Office during the scheduled exam period. The course instructor has no control whatsoever over the time and date of the exam. It will be a 50 minute exam with 50 multiple choice questions.

As with an in-person exam, the online exam must be written at the set time. Students with accommodations for extra time will have a longer time to write the exam. All requests to write a make-up exam must go through academic counseling only. Also, given the constraints of the course, it is not possible to write the exam early.

The exam questions will be multiple choice (and linear) and will cover all the readings and PowerPoints after the midterm. A brief study guide with points of what to study and example questions will be posted one week before the exam. If you keep up with the readings and PowerPoints, attend class, and make a decent effort at studying you will be well prepared.

As with the midterm, all requests for medical or compassionate extensions must go through academic counseling. Make-up examines will be scheduled for as soon as possible. Under no circumstances will you be allowed to miss the midterm and have your other grades reweighted

### **Book Review (Grad Students Only)**

Each graduate student will complete a 6-8 typed double-spaced page analytical book review of one of the assigned books. The review should focus on summarizing key points from the book including using specific (and properly cited) quotations from the book. Here, you need to cover a good breadth of the book to show you have read it. The review should also discuss the relationship between the book and points discussed in class as well as make specific (and properly cited) references to the course readings where applicable. The review should also comment on how points

in the book could be applied to other types of campaigns and the broader ethical and political implications of some of the techniques or points mentioned.

Late reviews will be penalized at a rate of 3% per day including weekends/holidays to a maximum of 10%. Extensions will only be given for documented illnesses, emergencies, etc. and will not be given for workload.

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## WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Jan. 9 Course Introduction and the New Science of Politics**

The first half of the class will be used to introduce the general subject matter of the course and to outline the course structure, readings, and requirements. The second half will be a lecture on the rise of political marketing, political consultants, and campaign-style lobbying. There are no readings or homework for this week.

### **Jan. 16 The Components of Political Campaigns**

This class examines the different components of the ‘air war’ and ‘ground war’ in election campaigns as well as the relationship between the national and local campaigns.

#### Discussion Questions

- What are the differences and relationship between the national and local campaigns?
- What role do different types of canvassing play in a campaign and what are some of the different ways to conduct it?
- What is the role of local campaign managers in constituency level campaigns?
- What are the different components of the air war in an election campaign?
- What are the different components of the ground war in an election campaign?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the readings, submit a one page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis that answers the first, second, and third discussion questions above.

### **Jan. 23 Election Campaign Strategy: Key Concepts**

This class examines key concepts related to election campaign strategy including: strategy vs tactics, campaign goals, the segmentation and targeting of voters, minimum winning coalitions, and how segmentation influences resource allocation related to the different components of the air and ground wars.

#### Discussion Questions

- What is political triage and how does defining a geographic coalition of voters work in Canada’s first-past-the-post electoral system?
- What does it mean to define a demographic coalition and what is micro-targeting?
- How does defining a geographic and demographic coalition help parties to target their resources in terms of the different components of the air and ground wars?
- What are some of the negative implications of Canada’s problems with Canada’s first-past-the-post electoral system?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the readings and last week’s PPT, submit a one page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis that outlines the basics of defining a geographic and demographic coalition

and how this help parties to target their resources in terms of the different components of the air and ground wars discussed last week.

### **Jan. 30 Leadership Race Strategy: Positioning and Rules**

This class examines campaign strategy concepts in the context of party leadership races with particular emphasis on how different election rules affect strategy and on the concept of positioning.

#### Discussion Questions

- What is positioning and how will candidates often be positioned differently in a leadership race compared to a general election?
- What is the ranked ballots voting system that has been used in recent Conservative leadership races, how does it differ from first-past-the-post voting, and how does it affect campaign strategy?
- How did Conservative leader Erin O'Toole position himself in his leadership race and then in the 2021 election?
- How did Patrick Brown win the Ontario Conservative leadership race?
- What are the different ideological factions in the federal Conservative party and how did they affect the positioning of some candidates?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the readings, submit a one page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis that summarizes the voting rules and basic dynamics of the O'Toole, Brown, and Poilievre leadership races.

### **Feb. 6 Election Campaign Strategy: The 2021 and Next Federal Elections**

This class examines the importance of focused campaign goals, how goals influence strategy, and situation analysis through SWOT and path analysis. These concepts are then applied to the 2021 Canadian federal election and the current situation of the federal parties.

#### Discussion Questions

- What are the different goals that political parties can have in elections?
- What were the basic strategies and outcomes for each party in the 2021 federal election?
- What are the SWOT points for each of the parties?
- What should be the main goal for next election for each party?
- What is the path for each of the party's to their main goal?
- Who do you think will win the next election and why?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the readings, submit a one page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis of the basic goals, strategies, and outcomes for each of the parties covered in the readings in the 2021 federal election.

### **Feb. 13 Message Development**

This class examines key techniques related to message development including: target audience research; customizing policies, leaders, and messages; creating and building narratives; and the use of framing/branding language to brand opponents and issues.

#### Discussion Questions

- How can polls and focus groups be used to research what target audiences care about and to test messages?

- How can and do parties customize their policies, leader, and messages for targeted voters?
- What are the differences between narratives and messages?
- What is framing language and what are examples of it?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the ‘Writing for PR’ reading, submit a one page, typed, single-spaced summary that outlines and explains some of the key types of media materials such as media/press releases, media kits, op-eds, and social media copy?

**Feb. 20      Reading Week - No Class**

**Feb. 27      MIDTERM EXAM DURING THIS CLASS TIME**

**Mar. 6      Student Election Campaigns**

This class applies key concepts related to strategy, the air war, and the ground war to student election campaigns using the case of the Western’s USC Presidential elections.

#### Discussion Questions

- What are the equivalents to the air war and the ground war in a Western USC election?
- In terms of strategy, which voters and influencers could be targeted and why and which components of the air and ground war would be most important?
- What has turnout and vote distribution been in recent USC presidential elections and about how many votes are needed to win?
- What is the voting system, how does voting occur, and what are some of the key rules of USC elections?
- What issues have recent USC presidential candidates, particularly the winners, focused on?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the readings, submit a 1 page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis that answers the discussion questions above.

**Mar. 13      Lobbying Campaigns: Case Study of the Oilsands and Pipelines Campaign**

This class examines key concepts related to strategy, the air war, and the ground war in the context of a major lobbying campaign by the oil and pipeline industries.

#### Discussion Questions

- What examples of situation/SWOT analysis, campaign goals, and strategy/target audiences/influencers do we see in the oil sands and/or pipelines cases??
- What examples of audience research, narrative, and message customization do we see in the oil sands and/or pipelines cases?
- What are the equivalents to the air war (paid media, earned media, war rooms, and rapid response/oppo) do we see in the oil sands and/or pipelines cases?
- What are the equivalents to the ground war (voter/constituency ID, voter/constituency communication, and GOTV/mobilization) do we see in the oil sands and/or pipelines cases?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the readings, submit a 1 page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis that identifies examples of air war and ground war techniques in the oil sands and/or pipelines cases.

### **Mar. 20 Direct Lobbying Tactics**

This class examines techniques related to the direct lobbying of decision-makers and influencers through private meetings as well as tactics related to townhalls and public consultation meetings. It also examines how interest groups have also sought to influence elections.

#### Discussion Questions

- What are the differences between social movements, advocacy groups, and the different types of campaigns?
- How do goals, segmentation, and influencers apply to direct lobbying campaigns?
- In terms of knowing your audience, what do politicians care about and how can you customize messages to them?
- What are some of the key tactics related to preparing for and conducting a lobbying meeting?
- What are some of the key tactics related to town halls, public consultation meetings, and lobby days?
- How can/have lobby groups sought to influence elections?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the readings, submit a 1 page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis that identifies examples of how different lobby groups/third parties have sought to influence elections?

Mar. 24 FRIDAY – GRAD BOOK REVIEWS DUE ON OWL BY 11:55 PM

### **Mar. 27 Crisis Management and Interviews**

This week examines key concepts and techniques related to issues management and crisis communications including media interview techniques. We will also conduct a media interview practical exercise. Grad students bring book review hard copies to class.

#### Discussion Questions

- What is a holding statement and how should you prepare for a media interview?
- What is the A-B-C technique for handling tough questions or questions that get you off your message?
- What are some of the characteristics and examples of war rooms discussed in the readings?
- What roles can/do SWOT, scenario planning, and media/opposition monitoring play in issues and crisis management?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the PPT, Greenpeace protest video within it, and the Interview Exercise Instructions, submit a 1-2 page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis that helps you prepare for the interview exercise. Check the instructions for which group you are in to find out if you are taking the company or protestors side. Your summary/analysis should include: a brief outline of the basic situation; a holding statement for your side; your side's goal, target audience, and narrative; some key messages/soundbites for your side; and a few tough questions you may be asked by the journalist.

### **Apl. 3 Long Term Campaigns**

This class examines the long-term public opinion campaigns by social movements and political parties. This includes: the use of stigmatization and normalization by advocacy groups as well as targeted outreach by political parties to new voter groups.

#### Discussion Questions



- What is a stigma and how does it influence public opinion?
- What are some of the techniques of a strategy of normalization and how were they employed by the LGBTQ movement and could they be employed by the atheist movement?
- What are some of the techniques of a strategy of stigmatization and how are they being employed by the fossil fuel divestment movement?
- How are pro-life and pro-choice groups using some of these techniques?
- How did Jason Kenney and the Conservatives conduct outreach to different cultural communities and what lessons could it offer to all parties today?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the readings and PPT, submit a 1 page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis that identifies the key techniques related to stigmatization and normalization with examples.

#### **Apl. 10 Social Media Advocacy, Influence Operations, and International Lobbying,**

This week examines the techniques employed by social media advocacy groups and foreign intelligence community influence operators as well as the international lobbying efforts of governments.

#### Discussion Questions

- What are some of the techniques used by social media advocacy groups such as Ontario Proud, Canada Proud, and North 99?
- How have Russian influence operators used similar techniques against the West?
- How do governments such as Canada and Saudi Arabia engage in campaign-style lobbying in the US?

#### Homework

- Drawing on the readings, submit a 1 page, typed, single-spaced summary/analysis that answers the discussion questions.