

Syllabus for Cougs Vote

Honors 270, Fall 2024

Course Information:

HNRS 270-03: Principles and Research Methods in Social Science

Dates: Aug 19--Dec 06

Meeting: TTH from 2:55 – 4:10 pm

Classroom: CUE 207

Campus: Pullman

Instructor Information:

Professor: Dr. Nicole O'Donnell, Ph.D.

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Phone: (440) 212-0247

Office: Goertzen 249

Course Description

Principles and Research Methods in Social Science is a special topics class in which honors students explore the theory and practice of social media in political communication research – especially in the context of the 2024 presidential election. Students will examine such issues as:

- Scholarship in social sciences; exposure to theoretical frameworks.
- Focus on theories and concepts of social media at the local, national, and global levels
- Practical application of social media in political communication
- Use of social media by candidates, political parties, news organizations, interest groups and citizens
- The role of social media in shaping campaign strategies, fundraising, news coverage, get-out-the-vote efforts, and other election-related activities
- Targeting online audiences through social media
- Utilization and planning of multimedia content for social media
- Organizational strategies for online networks for political campaigns

Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand theories and concepts of social media at the local, national, and global levels
- Apply networking theories and concepts to political communication
- Apply social media concepts to political communication and campaigns
- Assess social media needs and uses in political environments
- Articulate how social media impact the political process
- Compare and contrast today's political campaigns with pre-Internet campaigns
- Analyze the social media strategies of the presidential campaign in 2024
- Develop and implement social media strategies for get-out-the-vote efforts
- Master the ability to communicate key voter turnout messages
- Produce a personal social media portfolio

Required Materials

Students will choose one of the following texts for their book review project. Additional reading is optional:

Anderson, C. (2018). *One person, no vote: How voter suppression is destroying our democracy*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Lee, J. (2018). *Talking across the divide: How to communicate with people you disagree with and maybe even change the world*. Penguin.

Young, D. G. (2023). *Wrong: How media, politics, and identity drive our appetite for misinformation*. JHU Press.

Class Website

The primary class website is Canvas. This course space will be used for posting of readings, assignment grades, and all other course material. Ask your professor if you need assistance accessing or using Canvas.

Pre- or Corequisite

There are no pre- or co-requisites for students to enroll in this course.

Grades

Your final grade will be based on the following assignments and exams:

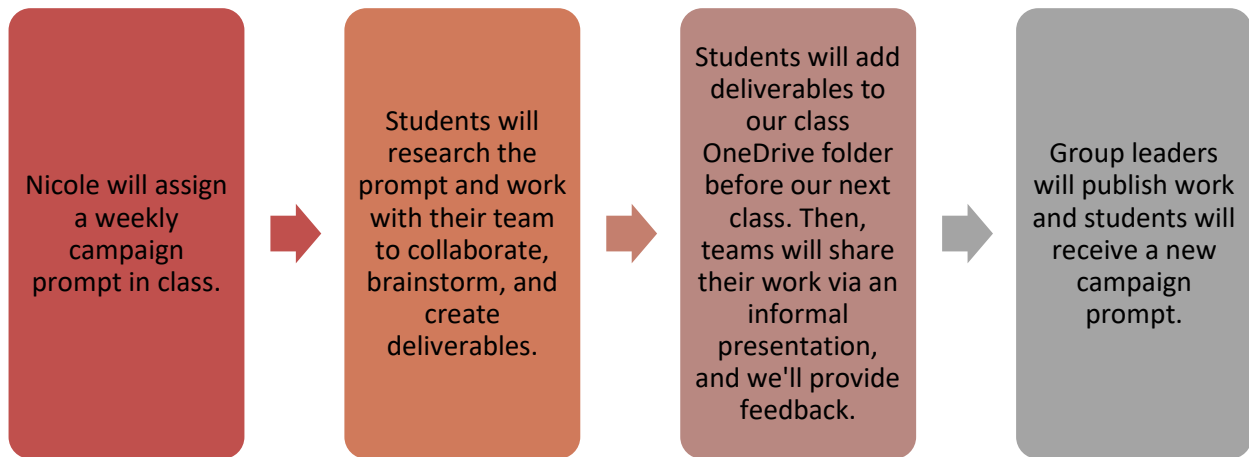
Component of Final Grade	Percent of Final Grade
Group Grades	
Voter registration promotion	10%
Vote-by-mail promotion	10%
Election Day promotion	10%
Get out the Vote campaign book	20%
Individual Grades	
Book review	10%
Personal portfolio	20%
Peer review	20%
Total	100%

Group Assignments

Get out the Vote Campaign

Students will work with Student Engagement Services and other civic engagement organizations to plan, implement, and evaluate a Get out the Vote campaign on campus. Our primary campaign goals are to inform and increase voter turnout by promoting registering to vote and voting by mail or voting on Election Day. Students will work in teams to manage the Cougs Vote social media accounts. We will work weekly to create, refine, and publish content online that will help students understand the process of voting. Weekly campaign prompts will be due in class. After Election Day, students will work on producing official campaign books that showcase their work.

Weekly Campaign Workflow:



Individual Grades

Book Review

Students will review one of the proposed texts that discusses voting, democracy, and political communication. After turning in individual reviews, the class will participate in a book-club style roundtable to discuss the importance of a Get out the Vote campaign. Students will have the option to pitch a book of their choice if they find a suitable alternative to those listed in the syllabus. Students are only required to read one of the three proposed books for this project. Additional reading is optional.

Peer Evaluation

Students will evaluate their teammates several times throughout the semester based on the following six categories: attendance at meetings, meaningful contribution to content, timeliness, work quality, cooperative attitude, and role performance.

Final Portfolio

Students are expected to create a final portfolio that highlights their unique contribution to the class campaign.

Distribution		
A ≥ 94%	A- = 90-93%	
B+ = 88-89%	B = 83-87%	B- = 80-82%
C+ = 78-79%	C = 73-77%	C- = 70-72%
D+ = 68-69%	D = 60-67%	F ≤ 59%

Grade Discussions

I do not discuss grades or any student records issues in class. Please schedule a meeting with me to discuss these issues. If necessary, I may ask you to submit a written petition together with your work in question.

Course Calendar

Provided separately and subject to change.

Student Expectations

I have high expectations for your performance and success in this class. I know many of you are concerned about your GPAs, but I encourage you to focus more on the material you are learning rather than on the grades you are earning. This learning-centered approach to class material will likely increase your grades in this course. Additionally, adhering to the following representation, respect, reading, writing, research, and technology expectations will enhance your success in this course.

Cougs Vote Representation. Throughout this course students will design and promote a “Get out the Vote” campaign on campus. Although students may engage in partisan politics in an individual basis outside of this course, **official communication from Cougs Vote social media must remain non-partisan.** Students must read and sign our responsible representation social media agreement before having access to post content online.

Student Respect. In this class we will discuss and debate many controversial things pertaining to the election. However, my experience has been that such can trigger some emotional partisanship. It must be appreciated that we all come from varied backgrounds that shape our political perspective/partisanship. Consequently, some of us are Democrats, Republicans, Independents, or other. Partisanship can be a good thing because it allows us to question and debate positions on issues, but we must respect the political views held and expressed by everyone in our class. While partisanship discussions are welcome in class, they must not bias the promotion of our “Get out the Vote” efforts.

Reading Expectations. Please come to class prepared with all assigned readings completed. Class lectures and discussions are organized to expand on concepts found in the readings. If you do not read, you will perform poorly on class assignments.

Writing Expectations. I expect your writing to be clear and well-organized. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation count on all assignments. Any of these errors are problematic and cast serious doubt on the accuracy of the facts in your project. Multiple errors of this type will lower your grade.

Research Expectations. Please remember that websites often contain errors. Some of the most incisive and important information about campaigns can only be found in books and academic journals. It is recommended that you visit <https://libraries.wsu.edu/> to find out more information about how to utilize the resources available to you.

Technology Expectations. Please use technology purposefully and professionally in class. You are expected to refrain from browsing the internet, texting, listening to music, and talking on the phone when meeting synchronously in class.

Late Work Policy. Students are expected to turn work in on time. Late work will receive a -1 pt grade deduction per week after the assigned deadline. Due to the utility of the assessment, late peer evaluations will not be accepted.

Attendance. Attendance in this class is required and critical to your success.

- Students are allotted three unexcused absences. Following this, students will receive a -1 point deduction to their final grade per missed class.
- Furthermore, missing a team presentation or in-class activity may result in an additional grade deduction based on peer review scores.

My Commitment

I aim to create a learning environment for you that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, national origin, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.). I also understand that the current crisis of COVID, economic disparity, and health concerns could impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please do not hesitate to come and talk with me.

UNIVERSITY SYLLABUS STATEMENTS

Statement of Service-learning

As part of this course, you will participate in a service-learning experience which is being facilitated by the Center for Civic Engagement. This type of experiential learning allows you to take what you are learning into the real world as you identify, examine, and apply course concepts. Students have often commented that their experiences with service-learning were enjoyable, meaningful, and enhanced their learning of course concepts! This course is worth 50 service learning hours.

Student civic engagement is a form of experiential learning, a cyclical model of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and testing (Kolb 1984). WSU students who participate in civic engagement activities have the opportunity to enhance their academic and personal growth in these areas:

- **Civic Responsibility:** Understanding issues in the community and the responsibility of citizens to participate in the democratic process and work toward positive change in society
- **Self Awareness and Efficacy:** Identifying one's own values and interests; respecting and appreciating the perspectives and life situations of others; and gaining confidence to take action that makes a difference
- **Academic Success:** Acquiring and strengthening knowledge by applying academic concepts to real issues in the community, leading to success in the classroom and development of professional skills

You will manage your service-learning experience on GivePulse (wsu.givepulse.com). This system tracks your activities and can even provide you with student involvement records to show all of the activities you have participated in at WSU. This will be a great resource when applying for jobs and/or graduate school!

If you have questions, please contact the CCE (cce.academic@wsu.edu or [509.335.7708](tel:509.335.7708)), stop by the Student Resource Center in CUB L-45 on the Pullman Campus, or visit the website at cce.wsu.edu. We hope that you enjoy and learn from your service experience!

Academic Integrity

All members of the university community share responsibility for maintaining and promoting the principles of integrity in all activities, including academic integrity and honest scholarship. Students are responsible for understanding the full Academic Integrity Statement. Students who violate WSU's Academic Integrity Policy (identified in WAC 504-26-010(3) and -404) will fail the assignment, will not have the option to withdraw from the course pending an appeal, and will be reported to the Center for Community Standards. If you have any questions about what is and is not allowed in this course, ask your course instructor.

Lauren's Promise: WSU's Commitment to Address Discrimination and Harassment

On October 22, 2018, Lauren McCluskey, 21 years old, was murdered by a man she briefly dated on the University of Utah campus, where she was a student. Lauren was raised in Pullman, Washington. Together with her parents, who are professors at WSU, this university community stands firmly behind

Lauren's Promise: WSU will listen and facilitate support and reporting options if someone is threatening you.

WSU prohibits discrimination and sexual misbehavior. Discrimination includes discriminatory harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual misbehavior. Sexual misbehavior includes stalking, violence between intimate partners, and all types of sexual violence.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

If you have experienced or have witnessed discriminatory behavior, you can contact the WSU Office of Civil Rights Compliance & Investigation (CRCI) and/or the [WSU Title IX Coordinator](#) at 509-335-8288. These offices can give you confidential resources and explain your choices to report the behavior. (Go to crci.wsu.edu for more information).

See Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Discriminatory Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Sex and Gender Based Violence ([Executive Policy 15](#)) and WSU Standards of Conduct for Students ([Chapter 504-26 WAC](#)).

University Syllabus

Students are responsible for reading and understanding all university-wide policies and resources pertaining to all courses (for instance: accommodations, care resources, policies on discrimination or harassment), which can be found in the [university syllabus](#).

References

Many people helped inform the design of this course and the statements listed on this syllabus. Dr. Marcus Messner and Jeff South at Virginia Commonwealth University's Robertson School of Media and Culture provided input on the design of this class. The instructor commitment statement was adapted from Marquette University's [CTL and Digital Learning Center](#). The student respect and partisan statement was adapted from Dr. Kenneth Warren's [American Presidency](#) syllabus.

Course Curriculum Mapping

Program SLOs course learning goals	SLO1: Demonstrate knowledge of political communication	SLO2: Acquire and analyze information per communication objectives	SLO3: Create communication products via multiple platforms
<p>Understand theories and concepts of social media at the local, national, and global levels</p> <p>Specifics: Communication and behavior change theories, research methods used in political communication, and strategies</p>	<p>Skill Level: Master concepts discussed in lecture and assigned readings.</p> <p>Students are assessed via in-class activities and assignments.</p>	<p>Skill Level: Master Students determine which theories, strategies, or methods may be applicable in certain situations.</p> <p>Students are assessed via in-class discussions/activities, and assignments.</p>	<p>Skill Level: Master Students use communication research to develop political communication and nonpartisan Get out the Vote campaign materials.</p> <p>Students are assessed via campaign plans and materials.</p>
<p>Assess social media needs and uses in political environments</p> <p>Specifics: Familiar with the benefits and drawbacks of using social media to promote voting behavior.</p>	<p>Skill Level: Master Discussed in lecture, students read the assigned book and assigned readings.</p> <p>Students are assessed via in-class discussions/activities, and assignments.</p>	<p>Skill Level: Reinforce Students critically examine media messages related to political campaigns.</p> <p>Students are assessed via in-class discussion/activities and assignments.</p>	<p>Skill Level: Master Students develop a political communication campaign and justify the strategies based on research and knowledge.</p> <p>Students are assessed via their campaign book and presentation.</p>
<p>Analyze the social media strategies of the presidential campaign in 2024</p> <p>Specifics: Explore communication strategies and key messages candidates use to promote their values and campaigns.</p>	<p>Skill Level: Master Students develop a communication campaign that uses concepts, theories, and background research.</p> <p>Students are assessed via their campaign book and presentation.</p>	<p>Skill Level: Master Students master the ability to communicate key voter turnout messages</p> <p>Students are assessed via their campaign book and presentation.</p>	<p>Skill Level: Master Produce a personal social media portfolio.</p> <p>Students are assessed via a personal portfolio.</p>