



Political Communication Spring 2021 COM 325 and POS 325

Instructor Information:

*Dr. Michael Dreher
Office: HC327H
Office Hours: By appointment.
Email: mdreher@bethel.edu*

*TA Information:
Brooke Thacker
Email: brooke-thacker@bethel.edu*

I'm typically around far more than office hours, except when I'm at virtual forensics tournaments. I'll generally have my office hours for each week on my door, or you can email me for additional times.

Course Description:

Analysis of the theoretical background behind political communication from a public speaking and media perspective. Attention to decision-making skills required in political campaigns. Discussion of advanced persuasive campaign theory. Prerequisite: COM110N, POS100, or consent of instructor. (Carries cross-credit in Political Science.)

Textbooks:

Hart, Roderick. *Trump and Us*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Jones, David A. *Political Campaigning in the U.S.: Managing the Chaos*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020.

Kinder, Donald and Nathan Kalmoe. *Neither Liberal Nor Conservative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Timothy D. Padgett, Ed. *Dual Citizens: Politics and American Evangelicalism*. Lexham Press, 2020.

All books are available at the Bethel bookstore, and in various electronic formats.

There may be additional readings available on Moodle based on both class interest and to update class texts as necessary with more recent information and research. Those will be mentioned in class as well as being available on Moodle.

What are the strands of the class?

If you had to ask me how I look at the class, I'd first tell you that I see this as an introduction to the field of political communication. There's far more that we won't and can't cover than what we will cover. I also know that people come from a variety of different places when it comes to interest and background in political communication. So, here are the what and why behind the topics we'll discuss:

- Presidential rhetoric. It's certainly an important part of political communication theory. Further, I think that President Trump challenged previous theory in ways that are worth examining (thus, the Hart book).
- Intersections of politics and culture. This is where we'll do some rhetorical analysis in order to understand more as to why certain ideas and themes keep recurring, and where we find those ideas in present-day discourse. And we'll also consider how politics has impacted culture and vice-versa. Is there a fragmentation of politics and culture? What will it take to unify us? This also includes gender and political communication.
- Political campaigns. We'll talk a bit about presidential campaigns, but we'll also get into regional and state campaigns. I know that some of you have experience in this area, and I encourage you to share those experiences as we go along. Some campaigns are, shall we say, run more effectively than others.
- Social media. There's been a history of how various forms of social media have been used in politics, and we'll talk about their expansion and contraction (i.e., limitations placed on Twitter, Tik Tok, the tremendous number of Facebook-specific ads, etc.)
- Intersections of politics and faith. This is an area that's been covered a lot in the news, but also, I think it's important on a personal level. How do *your* faith and politics intersect?
- Political issues. Some of you have mentioned issues you'd like to address, such as immigration and media censorship.
- Ideology and politics. What does it mean to be "liberal" or "conservative?" Are people really as ideological as they claim to be?
- Rhetorical theory. I'll give you a taste of rhetorical theory and communication analysis. We'll utilize theory as part of the final paper and the critical analyses.

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Objectives based on the Department of Communication Studies and the Rhetoric and Public Influence Emphasis:

This course serves four of the rhetoric and public influence objectives:

- Identify key features of persuasion
- Identify perspectives used to evaluate rhetorical texts
- Identify, explain, and analyze major theoretical approaches within the field of rhetorical studies
- Evaluate and interpret communication events, texts, and contexts

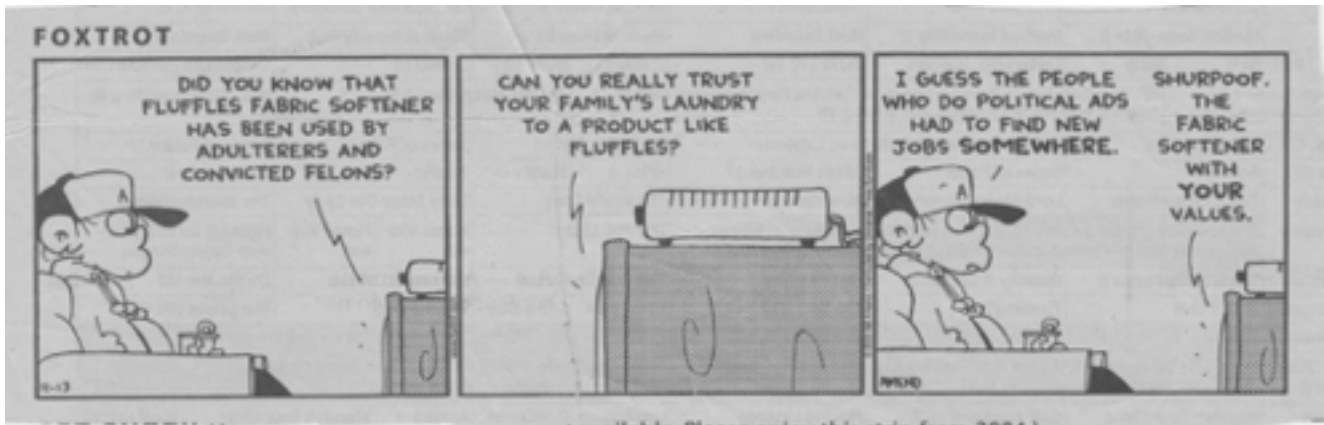
The course also meets an additional objective for the Department of Communication Studies:

- Recognize and illustrate perspectives used to evaluate events, texts, and contexts within different areas of the discipline.

Course Objectives

1. To articulate the relationship between politics, communication and culture.
2. To apply course materials to contemporary elections and political figures.
3. To explore the way that communication choices and ethical considerations affect political discourse.
4. To investigate the role of technology as it impacts campaign discourse.

Your objectives: What do you want to get from this class?



Accessibility:

Accessibility: Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (ORS). Email: accessibility-services@bethel.edu or in CC 426. Students are responsible to contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services. Once ORS determines if accommodations are to be made, they will notify the student and the instructor via email. Students choosing to use the disability-related accommodations must contact the instructor no later than five business days before the accommodation is needed. The instructor will provide accommodations (in conversation with ORS as needed), but the student is required to initiate the process for each accommodation.

Please note: For this class, there are no tests. Notes are typically a combination of our discussion as well as certain main points that I will bring out. If you need additional assistance with notes, please let me or one of your colleagues know. While I prepare notes for every class, I also recognize that the "current events" nature of this course means that we often adjust from my prepared notes in order to reflect what's currently happening in the realm of political communication.

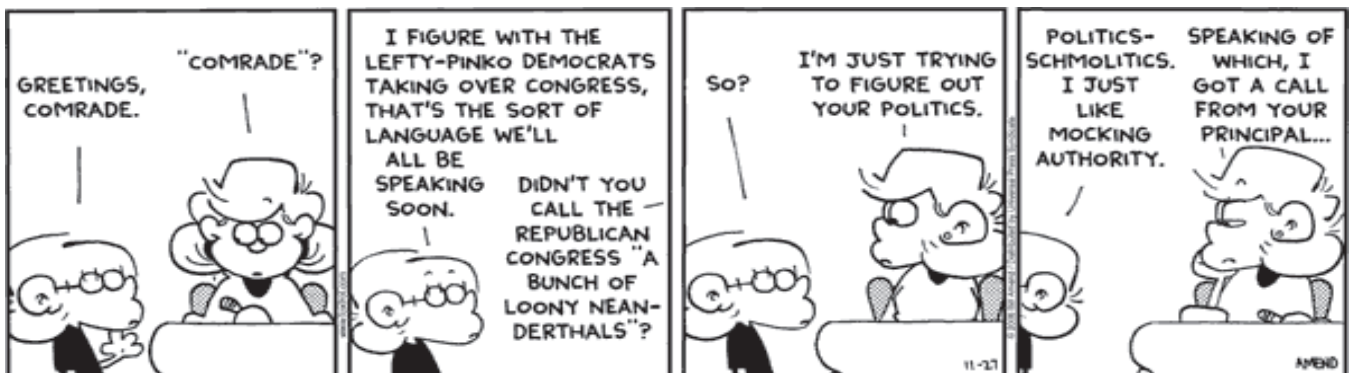
Assignments:

Please read the background first... even if (especially if) you've had me before.

The way in which I'll conduct this class is through a modified contract system. Basically, you will have a great deal of control in terms of your final grade in the course. There are elements of the course where I'll expect everyone to perform at a certain level; that's what it means to complete the course objectives successfully. But, if you want to go above and beyond, such as if you want an A, then you'll know what you need to do.

Note: If you choose to "mix and match," then your grade will be a combination of the steps you've completed. For example, if you complete your class participation at the "B" level, and your papers at the "C" level, then your grade will be an average of the B and the C.

For those of you in the Honors program, I'm very happy to work with you on "H-tags" in this course. Those will likely involve modifying one of the standard assignments in some kind of way, and will involve presenting your H-tag to the class as well. Let's talk - I enjoy working with students completing H-tags.



Course Expectations:

Class participation:

- To earn a D, you must complete 70% of the participation discussion on Moodle (i.e., if we have 30 discussions, you must participate in 21). You most likely rarely (if ever) respond to other posts. (I think, “OK, you’re getting something down so I know you exist!”)
- To earn a C, you must complete 80% of the participation discussion on Moodle. You sometimes respond to other posts. (I think, “Good! You’re reading the material!”)
- To earn a B, you must complete 90% of the participation discussion on Moodle. You frequently respond to other posts. (I think, “Wow! Good insight!”)
- To earn an A, you must complete 95% of the participation discussion on Moodle. You almost always respond to other posts. (I think, “Wow! Great insight!”)

Class Discussion: The way we’ll do this will be a combination of posts before and/or after class. There may be a couple of instances where the class discussion will take place online. I’ll let you know when those days are. I do believe that discussion sometimes takes a while to think through, and I do let people add to discussion forums after class. But, I also value your discussion in class, and encourage it. I’m curious about what you think and observe about the books you read.

Creative Assignment:

- To earn a D, you won’t complete any of the creative assignment options.
- To earn a C, you’ll successfully complete one creative assignment options.
- To earn a B, you’ll successfully complete two creative assignment options.
- To earn an A, you’ll successfully complete three creative assignment options.

I’ll give you more details and a set of guidelines about those separately, but there are at least four different options for the creative assignment:

- Create a TV/radio/web ad for a candidate
- Create an infographic (within the general realm of political communication - this could be for a candidate, for an issue advocacy group, etc.)
- Create a “briefing” for a candidate (essentially, how would you help the candidate prep for a debate?)
- Write a portion of (or an entire) announcement speech.

I’m also open to some of your ideas - after all, these are creative assignments, and I want them to be applicable to your future goals, whether they be in the realm of politics or not.

Short-Form Critical Analyses:

- To earn a D, you'll successfully complete four ad analyses
- To earn a C, you'll successfully complete six ad analyses
- To earn a B, you'll successfully complete six ad analyses as well as a short paper drawing conclusions from the analyses you completed.
- To earn an A, you'll successfully complete eight ad analyses as well as a short paper drawing conclusions from the analyses you completed.

Short-Form Critical Analysis: You'll be asked to examine political advertising on some level (national, state, local). For example, you might examine a presidential commercial (The Living Room Candidate is a good source). You'll conduct a short rhetorical analysis of that commercial. YouTube also has MANY political ads.

Please note: For the creative assignment and the short-form critical analysis, you either successfully complete the assignment, or you don't. Successful completion of the assignment is assumed at the B-level; you may resubmit an assignment until you reach that level.

Rhetorical Analysis: Students will choose a campaign, speaker, or an area within the realm of political communication. Using multiple sources and an appropriate theoretical approach, students will analyze the rhetoric of the area they are interested in.

Spring 2021 schedule: We may alter or change this schedule based on our progress as well as class interest. Assignments are noted on the day that we'll read/discuss in class.

So, February 11, we'll start talking about Chapter 1 and 2 of the Jones book. And yes, we will read some chapters out of order, in order to better group themes together, although I'll sprinkle the Christianity and politics throughout the semester. Think of it like a tasty dessert. :)

Date	Class Theme	Class Topics	Assignments
Monday, February 1	Introduction	Introduction	
Wednesday, February 3	Introduction, Social Media	The Bernie Sanders meme: What makes for a viral political text? And can one try too hard to become viral? (i.e., Hillary Clinton on Snapchat)	
Friday, February 5	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What fits into political communication? • Intersection of humor and political education (i.e., the Stephen Colbert SuperPAC) 	
Monday, February 8	Introduction, Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different aspects of the electoral process • Targeting and persuasion 	Jones, Chapter 1 & 2
Wednesday, February 10	Campaigns	Voter and candidate research	Jones, Chapter 3
Friday, February 12	Christianity & Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Religious right" & "Evangelical left"-- what do those terms practically mean? • History of movements such as the Moral Majority 	Padgett, Chapter 2
Monday, February 15	Campaigns	Earned media	Jones, Chapter 4
Wednesday, February 17	Campaigns	Paid media	Jones, Chapter 5
Friday, February 19	Social Media	Social media and campaigns	Jones, Chapter 6
Monday, February 22	Campaigns, Presidential	Trump v. Media	Hart, Chapter 7
Wednesday, February 24	Rhet Crit	Introduction to Rhet Crit: The Political Communication version	
Friday, February 26	Rhet Crit	Theories in context (to get us ready for Hart's use of them)	
Monday, March 1	Christianity & Politics	Presidents, Politics and Faith	Padgett, Chapter 1
Wednesday, March 3	Rhet Crit, Christianity & Politics	Application of Rhet Crit: Speaking of faith (Kennedy, Obama, Trump, etc.)	**
Friday, March 5	Gender and Pol. Comm.	Gender and Politics (Part 1)	**
Monday, March 8	Gender and Pol. Comm.	Gender and Politics (Part 2)	**
Wednesday, March 10	Presidential, Rhet Crit	Trump: Simplicity and the rhetorical situation	Hart, Chapter 2
Friday, March 12	Presidential, Rhet Crit	Trump: Passions and pathos	Hart, Chapter 4
March 15, 17, 19		SPRING BREAK	
Monday, March 22	Presidential, Rhet Crit	Trump: Stories and narrative	Hart, Chapter 5
Wednesday, March 24	Presidential, Rhet Crit	Trump: Medicine and Hofstadter's paranoid style of rhetoric	Hart, Chapter 6
Friday, March 26		CHRISTIAN COLLEGE NATIONALS - NO CLASS	
Monday, March 29	Presidential	Trump and Hillary Clinton: Identities	Hart, Chapter 8
Wednesday, March 31	Presidential, Ideologies	Trump and Populism	Hart, Chapter 3

**Specific readings will be found in Moodle and discussed in class.

Date	Class Theme	Class Topics	Assignments
April 2, April 5		EASTER BREAK	
Wednesday, April 7	<i>Ideologies</i>	<i>Are we ideological?</i>	<i>Kinder, Ch. 1</i>
Friday, April 9	<i>Ideologies</i>	<i>The ideology study</i>	<i>Kinder, Ch. 2-3</i>
Monday, April 12	<i>Ideologies</i>	<i>Becoming ideological</i>	<i>Kinder, Ch. 4</i>
Wednesday, April 14		ADVISING DAY - NO CLASS	
Friday, April 16	<i>Ideologies</i>	<i>Are we really becoming more ideological (i.e., what do you think of Kinder and Palmoe's findings?)</i>	<i>Kinder, Ch. 5</i>
Monday, April 19	<i>Ideologies</i>	<i>What are the consequences of ideology?</i>	<i>Kinder, Ch. 6</i>
Wednesday, April 21	<i>Ideologies</i>	<i>Kinder and Palmoe: So what?</i>	<i>Kinder, Ch. 7</i>
Friday, April 23	<i>Christianity & Politics</i>	<i>Foreign policy, communism, and God</i>	<i>Padgett, Ch. 3</i>
Monday, April 26		<i>Paper Presentations</i>	
Wednesday, April 28		<i>Paper Presentations</i>	
Friday, April 30	<i>Christianity & Politics</i>	<i>Domestic Affairs</i>	<i>Padgett, Ch. 4</i>
Monday, May 3	<i>Political Issues, Social Media</i>	<i>Section 230 and Media Censorship</i>	**
Wednesday, May 5	<i>Political Issues, Social Media</i>	<i>What's TikTok got to do with it?</i>	**
Friday, May 7	<i>Christianity & Politics</i>	<i>God and Country</i>	<i>Padgett, Ch. 5</i>
Monday, May 10	<i>Christianity & Politics, Social Issues</i>	<i>What does it mean to talk about the rhetoric of Black politics? Learning from Rev. Sen. Warnock and others.</i>	**
Wednesday, May 12	<i>Political Issues</i>	<i>Immigration Reform</i>	**
Friday, May 14		<i>Class Wrapup</i>	
Monday, May 17, 8:15-10:15 a.m.	<i>Final Exam Time</i>	<i>Papers Due and all assignments due</i>	

**Specific readings will be found in Moodle and discussed in class.

***I'm very likely to offer you grace on the paper turn in. But all of the other assignments must be turned in by Monday. Why? In order to give me some time to grade everything!