Journalism 499 Special Topics: Communications Strategies for Influencing Public Policy

Fall 2013
Wednesdays, 6:30-9:50pm
ASC 225

Instructors: Roberto Suro and David Morse

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Morse --Thursdays 9am to 11am and preferably by appointment

Course Description:

Whether the topic is global warming, childhood obesity, immigration reform, same-sex marriage, human rights in post-conflict societies, gun control or the state of public education, public policy debates today are often influenced by players outside of government who employ the strategies and tools of public relations to promote information, ideas and proposals to advance their policy positions and interests. Conversely, the public policy arena has become a critical laboratory for the development of new means of practicing public relations, including the increasing use of social networks to advocate for policy change. This course will examine the communication strategies employed by advocacy groups, think tanks, philanthropies and others to shape policy deliberations. Beginning with a broad overview of key concepts about the contemporary processes of policy change and the communications strategies used to influence them, the course will focus on how strategic communications shape the articulation of policy challenges and the options available to resolve them. . Students will then learn about the most effective tools used in what Jarol Manheim calls "information and influence campaigns." These strategies and tools will be assessed in a series of case studies of successful and unsuccessful policy campaigns to influence policy that constitute the core of the course. After building deeper understanding of the basics of strategic policy communications based on case studies of different influence and information campaigns, students will break into teams to choose a specific policy campaign for dissection and analysis as the capstone of the course. Throughout the course, students will hear from guest lecturers with deep experience in mounting of influence and information campaigns across a range of public policies.

The course's learning objectives center of six aspects of public policy advocacy and related skills:

Discovering the Activation Point:
1) Issue analysis: When is an issue ripe for action? Recognizing policy windows and successful agenda setting
2) Audience analysis: Actionable insights drawn from demographic data, public opinion surveyss, and media usage
3) Issue ecology: Understanding the interest groups, political factions and other stakeholders both supportive and in opposition, and how they shape the communications environment

Advocating Policy Change:
4) Coupling: the perfect marriage of problem and solution
5) Framing: the uses of evidence and messages to influence opinion and shape policy agendas and outcomes
6) Campaign building: identifying and sustaining an advocacycommunity that pursues a convergent policy strategy

The course is structured so that in the first seven weeks we will develop knowledge of these six learning objectives, focusing on each individually, seeing how they tie together and practicing related skills. We'll consistently turn to examples drawn from a variety of advocacy efforts, both successful and unsuccessful. Then, after the midterm, we will apply these six ideas as an integrated framework for the development and assessment of advocacy campaigns using a case study approach.

Readings:

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Berger, Jonah, Contagious: Why Things Catch On. New York: Simon & Schuster 2013
ALL OTHER READING AND VIDEO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD

Faculty Bios

Roberto Suro
Roberto Suro holds a joint appointment as a professor in the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism and the School of Policy, Planning and Development at the University of Southern California. He is also director of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, an interdisicplinary university research center exploring the challenges and opportunities of demographic diversity in the 21st century global city. Suro's latest book is *Writing Immigration: Scholars and*

Journalists in Dialogue (U of CA Press, 2011) co-edited with Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Vivian Louie.

Prior to joining the USC faculty in August 2007, he was director of the Pew Hispanic Center, a research organization in Washington D.C. which he founded in 2001. Suro's journalistic career began in 1974 at the City News Bureau of Chicago, and after tours at the Chicago Sun Times and the Chicago Tribune he joined TIME Magazine, where he worked as a correspondent in the Chicago, Washington, Beirut and Rome bureaus. In 1985 he started at The New York Times with postings as bureau chief in Rome and Houston. After a year as an Alicia Patterson Fellow, Suro was hired at The Washington Post as a staff writer on the national desk, eventually covering a variety of beats including the Justice Department and the Pentagon and serving as deputy national editor.

David Morse

David Morse has over 35 years experience leading public policymaking, advocacy, strategic communications and planning in the non-profit sector, philanthropy and government. He's been a professional staff member for the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, director of the President's Task Force on the Arts and Humanities, associate vice president for policy planning and director of federal relations for the University of Pennsylvania, director of public affairs for the Pew Charitable Trusts and, from 2001 to 2011, vice president for communications for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation's 3rd largest private philanthropy. He has recently been senior fellow at Encore.org, a San Francisco-based think tank focused on the Baby Boom generation and social entrepreneurship and is currently chief communications officer for the Atlantic Philanthropies, a global foundation dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people by focusing on human rights, conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Assignments & Grading

- Class participation (10%): Students are expected to attend all classes and to actively participate in class discussion.
- Short paper (15%): 1000 words on policy readings, due September 25
- Evidence presentation (10%): A five-minute, five-slide presentation telling a story based or making an argument based on a single data point. Presentations on Oct 9 and 16.
- Mid-term examination (15%): an open-book, take-home examination during the class session on October 23
- Advocacy blog (15%): The class will maintain an active blog recording and assessing current advocacy campaigns in public policy. Each post will include a link to a news item, a research report, public opinion poll, public service advertisement or some other content related to policy advocacy. And, this content will be briefly—two or three sentences—assessed in terms of at least

one of the course's six learning objectives. Students each will be responsible for posting once every two weeks. Classroom discussions will be held about the posts each week.

- Campaign assessment capstone project (35%) Students will work first in teams and then individually to develop a capstone assessment of a significant strategic communications campaign to influence a public policy issue. The project will develop in distinct stages during the second half of the semester.

  Instructors will assign students to teams Oct 16 and will then work with students to select a policy area or issue as their focus. Detailed discussions on the dimensions and requirements of the projects will be held with team members October 30. Teams' project objectives will be finalized in class the following week. Individual' objectives will be determined by November 13.

- Student teams will conduct issue and audience analysis and map the issue ecology. Individual each will examine the work of a major player, e.g. an advocacy group, an NGO or a think tank, that has exercised influence over the team's issue. This work will be uploaded on a web resource page, plugging into a simple WordPress template developed for this purpose by Prof. Suro, and then teams will make presentations on the last day of class. Extensive time will be available during class both for team meetings and consultation with the instructors.

- Deliverables:
  - December 4: Culminating team presentation assessing the selected issue campaign. What is the policy window for this campaign? Who are the protagonists, intermediaries, targets of the campaign? How have they been activated? What's the frame for the campaign's proponents and opponents? What strategies have been most effective, least effective and why? How would you measure the campaign's effectiveness?
  - December 11: Individual final papers. Students will each write a 3,000 word memo to the organization they have studied. The memo will offer an assessment of the organization's work in the context of a detailed study of the issue, and it will offer recommendations for future action.

The team exercise will account for 15% of the total grade, and the individual final paper will count 20% toward the total grade.

Plagiarism/School of Journalism Academic Integrity Policy

1. USC Statement on Academic Integrity
   USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own.

All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located at http://scampus.usc.edu/university-governance. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The review process can be found at http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS

2. School of Journalism Plagiarism/Academic Integrity Policy
Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or content from another and presenting them as one's own. The following is the School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity as published in the University catalogue:

"Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an 'F' on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism." All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators and the school's academic integrity committee.

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course who undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to one percent of the total available semester points for this course.

To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned in to the instructor by the last day of class.

Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301. The phone number is 213 740-0776.

Diversity

In addition to being ethical in developing and writing your papers, it is important that you consider diversity. When looking at your work, you should consider who is involved and how it will impact others. Is your work fair and does it represent all stakeholders in a balanced manner? This class will help you learn how to write in a manner that includes diverse viewpoints. The class will discuss racial, religious, gender and sexual orientation issues in the context of current events.

Course Schedule

A number of guest speakers, all of them notable practitioners in fields related to the coursework, are expected. Schedules are of course dependent on work commitments and will not be finalized until the term is underway. Therefore adjustments will be necessary to the sequence of classes. Instructors will keep students apprised of changes as far in advance as possible.

Reading assignments are listed for class sessions below. Instructors will post a reading guide for each week on Blackboard with questions that students should be prepared to address in class. Additional readings, particularly related to current events and classroom exercises will be posted on Blackboard.

Part I: Overview of Strategic Communications in Public Policy

August 28: Introduction to the course and syllabus review

September 4: Envisioning the goal: identifying and activating the audience, and achieving influence
- Spitfire Strategies: *Discovering the Activation Point,* http://www.activationpoint.org

September 11: Identifying policy opportunities and building a campaign
- Manheim, Jarol. *Strategy in Information and Influence Campaigns*, Chapter 2
- Kingdon, John W. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies.* New York:. Longman, second edition, 2011, (Selections).
- Bender, Bryan. "Many D.C. think tanks now players in partisan wars." *The Boston Globe.* August 11, 2013

September 18: Policy entrepreneurs and agenda setting

- Jaiani, Vasil and Andrew W. Whitford. "Policy windows, public opinion and policy ideas: the evolution of No Child Left Behind." *Quality Assurance in Education.* Vol. 19. No 1, 2011
- Downs, Anthony. "Up and down with ecology—the 'issue-attention cycle." *The Public Interest,* Spring, 1972.
- Mintrom, Michael and Phillipa Norman. "Policy Entrepreneurship and Policy Change." *Policy Studies Journal.* Nov. 2009.

Part 2: Tools for Advocacy

September 25: Cognitive psychology and the moral foundations of policy choices—the case of health care.
Reading:
- Jesse Graham, Jonathan Haidt, et al. "*Moral Foundations Theory: The Pragmatic Validity of Moral Pluralism*," 2012, selections.
- Haidt, Jonathan, "Of Freedom and Fairness." *Democracy Journal*, Spring 2013.
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "A New Way to Talk about Social Determinants of Health," http://www.rwjf.org/pr/product.jsp?id=66428
- Klein, Ezra, "Unpopular Mandate," *The New Yorker*, June 25, 2012.

October 2: Evidence and framing: defining an issue with data and rhetoric
- Ezra Klein, selected posts from "Wonkblog." *The Washington Post*
  o "You Can't Deny Global Warming After Seeing this Graph", *Washington Post, July 9, 2013*
    http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/07 /09/you-cant-deny-global-warming-after-seeing-this-graph/
- Weston, Drew. "*Immigrating from Facts to Values: Political Rhetoric in the U.S. Immigration Debate*." Migration Policy Institute. 2009
- Lakoff, George and Sam Ferguson. "*The Framing of Immigration*." May 22, 2006.
- Lake, Celinda, Frank Sharry et al. *New Messaging on Immigration: How to talk about immigrants in America. (*Messaging strategy memo for advocates of Comprehensive Immigration Reform) 2012
- Lexington. "The war of the words: How Republicans and Democrats use language." *The Economist.* July 13, 2013.

October 9: The narrative as a tool for persuasion
- Reich, Robert B., "Story Time: The lost art of democratic narrative," *The New Republic*. March 28, 2005.
- Goodman, Andy, *Storytelling as Best Practice,* 5th edition (handout)
- Berger, Jonah. *Contagious.* Introduction and Chapters 1-3
- Leo Burnett Worldwide, "Adventures in Reverse Psychology: Troy Library" **http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nw3zNNO5gX0**

October 16: The evolving role of social media in policy debates.
- Sendhil Mullinathan, "Solving Social Problems with a Nudge",
  TED talk February 2010: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBJQENjZJaA
- Waters, Richard D. et al. "Engaging stakeholders through social networking:
  How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook." *Public Relations Review.*
  2009
- *Contagious,* Chapters 4-6 and epilogue

October 23: Midterm

Part 3: Assessing Campaign Strategy and Execution

October 30: Litigation strategies: abortion, marriage equality , crime and race
Subtopic: mediation, advocacy and public policy
- "Abortion viewed in Moral Terms: Fewer See Stem Research and IVF as
  Moral Issues." Pew Research Center. August 15, 3013
- Leonhardt, David. "Why Abortion Is Not Like Other Issues." *The New York
  Times.* July 13, 2013.
- Ball, Molly. "The Marriage Plot: Inside This Year's Epic Campaign for Gay
  Equality." *The Atlantic.* December, 2012.
- Graber, Doris. "Mediated Politics and Citizenship in the Twenty-First
  Century." *Annual Review of Psychology.* 2004.
- Goodman, J. David. "As Critics United, Stalled Battle Against Frisking
  Tactic Took Off," *The New York Times*, August 13, 2013
  **http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/14/nyregion/in-a-crescendo-
  the-citys-crime-policy-changed.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0**

November 6: Legislation strategies: Health and immigration reform
Subtopic: mediation in the digital age
- Kingdon, John W. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York:.
  Longman, second edition, 2011, Epilogue on Health Care.
- Suro, Roberto. "The Power of the Latino Vote: Instant History, Media
  Narrative and Policy Framework." (forthcoming, Praeger Press)
- Tomas Rivera Policy Institute. "No White House Without Us: The Narrative of
  Latino Empowerment in Univision's 2012 Election Coverage." 2012
- Bennett, Lance W. and Jarol B. Manheim. "The One-Step Flow of
  Communication." Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social
  Sciences. November 2006.

November 13: International strategies: Climate Change
Subtopic: Social media and social mobilization

- Ereaut, Gill and Segnit, Matt, *Warm Words: How are we telling the climate story and can we tell it better?* Institute for Public Policy Research, 2006
- DeLuca, Kevin Michael. "Greenpeace International Media Analyst Reflects on Communicating Climate Change." *Environmental Communication.* July 2009.
- Gladwell, Malcolm, "Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted," Oct 4, 2010
- Shirky. Clay, "The Political Power of Social Media," Foreign Affairs," Jan-Feb 2011
- Gladwell, Malcolm and Clay Shirky, "From Innovation to Revolution: Do Social Media Make Protests Possible?" Foreign Affairs, March-April 2011

November 20: Behind the Advocates: The Gates Foundation and Education Reform
- Nicholas Lemann, "Citizen 501(c)(3)," *Atlantic Monthly,* February 1997

- Parry, Marc. Et al. "The Gates Effect." *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Special Report. July 14, 2013
- Gates Foundation response and commentaries on special report.

November 27:Thanksgiving Recess

December 4: Student Presentations and wrap up

December 11: Exam Day
Assignment:
Individual final papers are due. Students will each write a 3,000 word memo to the client that follows up on the pitch and that summarizes the research, the strategy, the campaign plan and how the sponsors will evaluate success.