

COMM/PD – Digital Communication for Ballot Measure Campaigns

X– 15 week course

Fall semester 2016

Time and Location:

Instructor: Ryan Waite

Office:

Office Hours:

Contact Info: 571-218-5478 email: ryanjwaite@gmail.com

Course Description

As a class we will explore digital communication strategies and tactics used over the course of a statewide ballot measure campaign. Together we will select one of the current ballot measures on the ballot for the November 2016 election. We will conduct a mock campaign with members of the class representing each side of the ballot measure. As we learn about the various digital strategies that are typically used during a ballot measure campaign, you will be asked to prepare recommendations to your "client". Depending on the nature of the ballot measure chosen, we may even take the things we learn and implement actual digital tactics and see how they perform in the real world. We will meet with campaign experts and get their feedback on the ballot measure process.

Since this course will last through the election, we will have the unique opportunity to assess the ballot measure outcomes and the role digital communication played in the success or failure of the ballot measure. By the end of the course, you will become familiar with numerous digital strategies and tactics used in campaigning and will have gained solid experience in how to use digital communication in a campaign environment.

Course Goals

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Develop an understanding and tangible experience in digital communication strategies and tactics.
- Develop an understanding of ballot measure campaigns and the role digital communication plays in throughout the course of a campaign.
- Develop an understanding of the unique factors at play during a presidential election cycle and how that influences the campaign and outcome of a ballot measure.
- Gain an appreciation for the numerous groups that have an interest in the outcome of a ballot measure and how those groups and individuals can be communicated to through digital media.

Course Notes

Homework will include observational and experiential assignments as well as pertinent weekly readings.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Articles and book sections posted to Blackboard weekly. All posted reading mandatory. First 15 minutes of class will be spent reviewing the reading and prior weekly assignment.

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

Weekly Assignments	50%
Participation	15%
Final Presentation	35%

Assignment Submission Policy

Papers or other assignments (screenshots, links, etc.) will be delivered both through Blackboard, via email or in hard copy form by due date and time.

Additional Policies

Laptops will be allowed open in class.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics and Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 Dates	Class Introductions/Campaign Structure Introduction, Campaign Structure, Ballot Measure Overview/Picking Teams	Meet with group/decide campaign name	
Week 2 Dates	Digital Communication and Politics Overview, History of Politics and Digital Communications, Overview of Digital Channels, Channels as Applied to Campaign Structure	With specified budget, put together a rough digital communications plan	
Week 3 Dates	Fundraising, Overview of Digital Fundraising, Digital Fundraising Tactics, Tips and Tricks	Write a 3 email fundraising series for your campaign	Rough Digital Plan due prior to class
Week 4 Dates	Data, Overview of the Role of Data in Digital Politics Digital Coalition Building,	1 page paper on who are your core constituencies, and where to obtain data	3 emails due prior to class

	Data Sources and Providers	about each and estimated cost	
Week 5 Dates	Mobile, Overview of the Rise of Mobile, Mobile Engagement, Mobile Tactics	Based on your constituencies, 1 page on each group's mobile usage, and how to best communicate with them using mobile tactics	Constituencies paper due prior to class
Week 6 Dates	Social Media, Overview of Social Media, Pros/Cons of Different Social Media Channels, Emerging Social Media	Set-up a Facebook, Twitter or Instagram page for your campaign and make at least one post, using social media, find 1 campaign on your side and evaluate their social media presence and find 1 campaign against and do the same. Write a brief paragraph on what would be a good way for a campaign like yours to use Snapchat.	Mobile Usage paper due prior to class
Week 7 Dates	Websites, Overview of Websites in Political Campaigns, Alternatives to Websites, Search Engine Optimization	Build a basic webpage using a free website builder (squarespace, etc) and create homepage with your primary message	Social Media assignment due prior to class
Week 8 Dates	Digital Advertising, Overview, Search vs. Social vs. Mobile vs. Display, Addressable and Programmatic Media Buying	Create an ad on FB and select an audience to run your ad to with proper geographic and	Webpages due prior to class

		interest targeting	
Week 9 Dates	Digital Video, Overview, Examples and Methods, Traditional TV vs Digital Video	Create a 30 second video script for your campaign	Facebook Ad assignment due prior to class
Week 10 Dates	Negative Campaigning, Overview, Pros and Cons of Going Negative, Examples, Evaluation of Presidential Campaigns and Their Negative Tactics	Create a 30 second video script attacking the other campaign	30 Second Script assignment due prior to class
Week 11 Dates	Get Out the Vote, Overview, Absentee Ballot Strategies, Integrated Tactics	Create a tweet, FB post, Instagram Post, or an email blast to go out to your supporters encouraging them to get to the polls, write a detailed paragraph on how you would use data to make your GOTV efforts more effective.	30 Second Negative Script due prior to class
Week 12 Dates	Campaign Night Watch Party, Watch Election Returns, Real-Time Social Media Monitoring, Evaluation of Campaign Tactics	Engage on Twitter on election returns	GOTV assignment due prior to class
Week 13 Dates	Overview and Q&A, Review of Each Section, Question Answer Session, Final Presentation Discussion	With what you have learned and using the elements you have created over the course of the class, create a digital pitch presentation on what you would do digitally for your campaign. Cover all of the elements discussed and provide an accurate budget	Screenshot of Election Night Tweet due prior to class
Week 14 Dates	Prep for Final Presentations, Assessment of Real Ballot Measure (Winners, Losers, Evaluation of	Meet with me to see how you are doing and if you are on	

	Digital Tactics) Group Meetings	track (Tim Gunn style)	
Week 15 FINAL Date	Final Presentations, Announcement of Winners of Mock Campaign		Final Presentations

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 (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

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, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.