

Fall 2021 – Tuesdays – 2-5:20 p.m.

Section: 21456D

Location: ASC 328

Instructor: Roberto Suro

Office: ASC 206

Office Hours: Thursdays, 1-3 p.m.
and by appointment preferably

Contact Info: suro@usc.edu

I. Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize students with the key strategies and tools used in communications campaigns designed to influence public policy. Student will develop skills in analyzing and evaluating such campaigns.

Whether the topic is global warming or criminal justice, a variety of players outside of government are influencing policy debates by using the tools of public relations to promote information, ideas and positions. Conversely, the public policy arena has become a critical laboratory for the development of new means of practicing public relations. This course will examine the communication strategies employed by advocates, think tanks and philanthropies to shape policy deliberations and decisions. While examining all aspects of a policy campaign, including litigation and lobbying, our focus will fall on messaging strategies. We'll assess the imagery, language and media conduits used to influence public opinion, news media coverage and ultimately decision makers.

The course will survey some current, still controversial, thinking about the intersection of communications strategies, policy processes and behavior change. Students will learn about the most effective tools used today in what Jarol Manheim calls "information and influence campaigns." In the second half of the course, this knowledge will be developed by constant reference to case studies. At the end of the course, students will be able to understand and evaluate how a communications strategy operates within a specific policy context and as integral effort of a larger campaign to effect substantive policy change. In the capstone project, students will write a professional memo that analyzes messaging strategies in an existing policy campaign and that offers recommendations to a specific player in that campaign.

II. Overall Learning Objectives

The course's learning objectives center of a five-step methodology for assessing the communications strategy of public policy advocacy campaign. Students will understand and appraise analytical concepts associated with each aspect of the analysis and will practice the method repeatedly over the course of the semester, culminating in a capstone case study. Key objectives are to:

- 1) Describe the moment: At what point in the policy process is the advocacy unfolding? Who are the players? What policy history is relevant? What contextual factors are significant?
- 2) Explain the strategy: How will the intended policy change come about? Who are the decision makers, and how will they be influenced? How will diverse publics be addressed? What assets will be deployed? What is the timeline for the campaign?
- 3) Appraise the Message: What will the campaign say, and how will it say it? How will it be adapted to diverse publics?
- 4) Identify the Activation: What actions will the message produce in its audiences?
- 5) Assess the Impact: What are the results and how will they be evaluated?
- 6) Assemble multiple analytical hypotheses into a coherent critique.

III. Course Notes

By its very nature, this course will examine the work of advocates on highly contested topics. Our objective will be to apply the same analysis regardless of our personal views regarding the positions advanced. Indeed, students will undoubtedly be obliged to analyze the work of advocates with whom they hold strongly contrary opinions. Similarly, students are likely to find themselves assessing the shortcomings of advocates whose views they support. That is not to say that personal views will be excluded from classroom conversations. Rather students will need to be able to express their thoughts about a policy issues while conducting a methodical, evidence-driven analysis of how advocates of various persuasions have addressed those issues.

This course is designed as a seminar in which students learn from each other as much or more than they learn from the instructor and guest speakers. That means that space will be made for all voices to be heard and treated with respect, but also students should expect to be challenged and asked to play devil's advocate to their own positions.

Class sessions will be help both in person and on Zoom, and some classes will be a combination of both. Zoom will be used primarily when the course hosts guest speakers or to facilitate team exercises.

A strict no-screens rule will be enforced at all times, except when students are advised by the instructor to use laptops. The use of laptops, smart phones and other digital devises will be prohibited during lectures, seminar discussions and visits by guest speakers. Students should always be prepared to take notes on paper. On the other hand, students should bring laptops to every class session for use, under the direction of the instructor, in individual or team exercises.

IV. Description of Assignments

Reading Exercises (50%): For each of ten weeks over the course of the semester students will be assigned a brief exercise based on the reading for that week. The assignments will take several forms including memos that respond to prompts, or annotation and commentary on Perusall, or the preparation of team presentations. Each exercise will count for 5 percent of the final grade.

Midterm (20%): A midterm examination will be administered during class time on October 12. The examination will cover readings and class discussions from the first seven weeks of the course.

Campaign Assessment Capstone Project (30%)

Students will develop a case study of an advocacy communications campaign. The case can be a recent campaign that arrived at some sort of a conclusion, e.g. marriage equality, or an episode in an ongoing saga, e.g. the fights over how U.S. history is taught in schools. The primary endeavor will be an analysis of specific past events by applying the five-step methodology. However, students will also draw conclusions—lessons learned—that are applicable going forward.

Students will focus on the work of a specific organization that operates on their team's, e.g. Greenpeace, the NRA, Color of Change. The paper will be written in the form of a memorandum to a specific advocacy organization, either the one under study or one of its competitors or collaborators.

The project will develop in distinct stages during the second half of the semester, and ample time will be allotted during class sessions for students to discuss their projects with both the instructor and their classmates. Between weeks eight and ten, students will narrow their topic and identify a specific focus with a brief memo due in week ten describing the student's plans. Update with research notes and preliminary findings will be due in weeks 13 and 14. No class will be held week 14, and instead the instructor will hold individual private meetings with students to review the project. In class week 15 students will make a seven-minute presentation to the class summarizing their work to that point. The paper will be due on December 9, the exam day for the course. At week eight students will form teams, and by week ten students will identify. It will be comprised of a 5,000-word memorandum in a format that closely follows the five-step methodology.

The instructor will provide detailed instructions throughout as well as a detailed rubric.

V. Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Reading exercises	50%
Midterm	20%
Campaign assessment capstone	30%
Total	100%

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

c. Grading Standards

All assignments will be judged for their sophistication, eloquence, professionalism, and command of relevant concepts.

“A” assignments show an eloquent mastery of ideas and their application one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited materials; demonstrate creativity, rigor, and sophisticated thinking; speak to an audience in a clear and thoughtful manner; and represent the very best of the class’s work.

“B” assignments show a good use of concepts; employ relevant examples; contain some grammatical errors and logical problems; and represent work that adequately communicates a student’s point of view.

“C” assignments show a minimally adequate use of concepts; lack relevant examples; have many grammatical errors and serious logical limitations; and demonstrate work that is not well respected in professional or scholarly settings.

“D” assignments are barely adequate application of concepts; require excessive rewriting and lack compelling examples; have many errors and have significant flaws in logic; and represent work that requires significant improvement.

“F” assignments fail to meet the major assignment criteria, are late, rife with grammatical or logical errors, and generally do not meet the standards of quality USC Annenberg students are expected to meet.

The following are some other circumstances that could warrant a grade of “F” and potential USC/Annenberg disciplinary action:

- Making up quotes or any other information.
- Plagiarizing part or all of any material.
- Missing a deadline.
- Collaborating in a way expressly forbidden by the assignment.

Attendance and participation:

All students are expected to attend all class sessions. . Students seeking an excused absence are responsible for making a request by way of an email to the instructor, Prof. Roberto Suro (suro@usc.edu) at least 24 hours in advance and will need to explain the circumstance that made their absence unavoidable. Students who find themselves ill, symptomatic, or quarantined should of course refrain from attending class in person. In such cases, students should contact Prof. Suro as soon as they know they will not be present. Arrangements will be made for students to participate remotely or to get access to a recording of the class. Except in the most dire circumstances, students will be expected to complete readings,

reading exercises and in-class exercises even if they are absent. Attendance will be taken at all classes, and students with an unexcused or unexplained absence will be penalized with the deduction of one point from their final grade.

VI. Assignment Submission Policy

Specific instructions will be provided for the submission of each segment of each assignment. Assignments turned in late will be penalized by half a grade for the first 24 hours and a full grade after 24 hours. Students must request permission to submit an assignment more than 48 hours late via an email to the instructor Prof. Roberto Suro (suro@usc.edu) with a justification for the delay. Any assignment turned in more than 48 hours late can be graded as an “F” at the chief instructor’s discretion.

VII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

All reading and other course content will be posted on Blackboard.

VIII. Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the **Annenberg Digital Lounge** for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s **Information Technology Services** website.

IX. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/23/21 – 12/3/21)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20213/calendar/>

Friday, September 10: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 10: Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, September 10: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Tuesday, September 14: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, October 8: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, October 8: Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Friday, November 12: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

X. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Important note to students: Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverables
1 8/24	Course introduction		
2 8/31	Policy windows: Knowing when an issue is ripe.	-- Kingdon, John W. Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies. New York: Longman, second edition, 2011, (Summary) -- Downs, Anthony. “Up and down with ecology—the ‘issue-attention cycle.’” The Public Interest, Spring, 1972. --Yusuf et al. “The Sea is rising... but not onto the policy agenda.” Government and Policy. 2016	Reading Exercise 1

3 9/7	Building an influence campaign	-- Manheim, Jarol. Strategy in Information and Influence Campaigns, Chapter 2 -- Castells, Manuel, "A Sociology of Power." --Hestres, Luis. E. "Preaching to the Choir: Internet-mediated advocacy, issue public mobilization, and climate change." New Media & Society. 2014 --Mayer, Jane. "The Big Money Behind the Big Lie." The New Yorker, 2021	Reading Exercise 2
4: 9/14	Social Movements	--Morris, Aldon. "How Social Justice Movements Succeed." Scientific American, March 2021 --Garza, Alicia. "Why Protests Fail?". Activist Graduate School. 2021 --Milkman, Ruth. "A New Political Generation: Millennials and the Post-2008 Wave of Protests." American Sociological Review 2017	Reading Exercise 3
5 9/21	Pathways of Persuasion	-- Daniel Kahneman, <u>Thinking Fast and Slow</u> , Chapters 1-9 -- "The Disrupted Mind." Mindworks Lab. 2021	Reading Exercise 4
6 9/28	Framing and other media effects	--Cacciatore et al. al "The End of Framing as we Know it and the Future of Media Effects" Mass Communication and Society. 2016 -Lakoff, George. "Why It Matters How We Frame the Environment. Environmental Communications. 2010	Reading Exercise 5
7 10/5	Understanding and activating publics	--Spitfire Strategies. Discovering the Activation Point -- "Towards New Gravity," The Narrative Initiative. 2019	Reading Exercise 6
8 10/12	Midterm		Midterm
9 10/19	Polarized and Online: Assessing Contemporary Publics	--Pew Research Center: "The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider." 2017 and subsequent updates. --Molla, Rani. "Social Media is Making a bad political situation worse." Vox 2020 --Lee Rainie et al. "Trust and Distrust in America." Pew Research Center, 2019 --Amy Mitchell et al. "How Americans Navigated the News in 2020." Pew Research Center. 2021	Reading Exercise 7

10 10/26	Perceptions of Risk: Guns and Climate	--Douglas, Mary and Aaron Wildavsky. "Risk and Culture." Introduction. University of California Press. 1982. --Campbell, Troy and Aaron Kay. "Solution Aversion." APA Journal. 2014 --Kahan, Dan M. "The Gun Control Debate: A Culture-Theory Manifesto." Wash& Lee Law Review 2003. --Frum, David. "Mass Shootings Don't Lead to Inaction." The Atlantic 2017	Reading Exercise 8
11 11/2	Framing Immigration	--Luntz, Frank. "Respect for the Law and Economic Fairness: Illegal Immigration Prevention." Luntz Research and Strategic Services. 2014 --Lakoff, George. "The Framing of Immigration." Buzz Flash. 2006 --Suro, Roberto. "Promoting Misconceptions—News Media Coverage of Immigration." CSII. 2009 --Hart, Peter and Celinda Lake. "Winning the Immigration Issue." Hart Research, 2008	Reading Exercise 9
12 11/9	Comparative Strategies in LGBTQ activism: AIDS and Marriage	--Schulman, Sarah. "Let the Record Show." Intro and Chapter 1. Macmillan. 2021 --Olsen, Katherine A. "Telling Our Stories: Narrative and Framing in the Movement for Same Sex Marriage." Social Movement Studies. 2013. --Ball, Molly. "The Marriage Plot: Inside this year's epic campaign for gay equality." The Atlantic. 2012	Reading Exercise 10
13 11/16	Criminal Justice Reform:	--Barsoum, Gigi. "From the Streets to the Courts to City Hall: A Case Study of a Comprehensive Campaign to Reform Stop and Frisk in New York City." Atlantic Philanthropies. 2019 --Cobb, Jelani. "The Matter of Black Lives." New Yorker, 2016 --Ransby, Barbara. "Making all Black Lives Matter." Introduction. University of California Press. 2018	Status memo on final project
14 11/23	Individual meetings		Status memo on final project
15 11/30	Presentations		In class presentations
Dec 9, 2-4 p.m.	Final paper due by noon Summative experience		Final paper

XI. Policies and Procedures

Policies and Procedures

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 that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 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 into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism or public relations class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“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.”

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.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symphlicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

XII. About Your Instructor

Roberto Suro holds a joint appointment as a professor in journalism and public policy at the University of Southern California. In 2019 he was awarded a Berlin Prize by the American Academy in Berlin. He received a 2018 USC Mentoring Award for work with undergraduates.

Prior to joining the USC faculty in August 2007, he was director of the Pew Hispanic Center, a research organization in Washington D.C. that he founded in 2001, and in 2004 he was part of the management team that launched the Pew Research Center.

Suro spent nearly 30 years as a journalist, starting his career at the City News Bureau of Chicago, and including tours at the Chicago Sun Times and 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 joined The Washington Post where he served as a staff writer on the national and as deputy national editor.