This course will investigate theory and research concerning electoral campaign communications. A significant literature has developed which studies politics and communication, especially mass communication. We will dip into that literature, and will attempt to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the role of the media in U.S. politics.

This course is a seminar—so you and I are both members, and the usual ‘hierarchy’ of authority, responsibility and ‘power’ is relaxed (though not ‘disappeared’). That is, each of you is responsible for providing your insight, contributing to the intellectual development of all members of the seminar (yourself included), and participating in the search for new knowledge that is the mainstay of graduate education. I am still responsible for ‘grading’ you, leading the charge in the quest for enlightenment, and guiding your development. Hopefully, in less flowery language, what we will develop is a partnership that will enhance your graduate experience at UK as well as your experience of this class.

Assignments and weights

In order to learn more about the field of political communications and the insights of scholars who have worked or are currently working in the area, we will read a significant amount of material on political campaigns. You needn’t worry that you will exhaust the potential reading as it is one of the most heavily-studied communication areas. This is a seminar, so you will be expected to enter the classroom having read and digested the material, and ready to discuss and debate the content of each piece as well as the connections among the readings. Some will have read well beyond the required materials for the week.

Class participation, including online discussion of readings, in-class comments and any other contribution you make to the success of the seminar will be evaluated for its quality and quantity. That is, we want to hear from you if you give some thought to your comments and help us all to think about and better understand the content of the course. I don’t want to discourage occasional top-of-mind expression. I just want to make sure that there is space for everyone to comment in one way or another and to encourage you to prepare to comment in ways that will increase the level of discourse we attain in class and online. I will occasionally comment on your ideas and expressions online—mainly to ask for clarification, detail, or increased quantity. (20 points)

To evaluate your ability to find information, develop a cogent argument that synthesizes material and critiques evidence, and to develop arguments in a compelling manner, we will have a formal debate over a topic of significance within political campaign communication. This will be a team project and will be explained in detail during the semester (15 points).

You will each be responsible for leading a class discussion on an article regarding a piece of research. Leading does not mean presenting—your comments may start the discussion on each of the issues I ask you to cover, but it is also your responsibility to draw out the views of the other members of the seminar on those topics. For their part, it is their responsibility to have prepared comments on each of those topics, as outlined in class the previous week (15 points total).

Each seminar member is to produce a paper that either reviews an area of content from the course in a way resembling that for use in the literature review for a thesis or, hopefully, takes on a research project and carries out either secondary or primary research. I will try to guide you toward good research questions, appropriate methods and compelling presentation so that when you are through you have a paper that will be accepted for presentation at a national conference and, ultimately, a refereed journal. A second possibility for us to discuss is the development of a set of papers on similar topics that can be developed into a book project. (50 points)
The total available points, then, is 100. To receive a grade of “A” you would need to generate 86 or more points. For a “B”, 70 or more points. Below 70 points would be a “C”.

Required text:


Major theoretical-type things:

Metatheory--you should have some understanding of the presuppositions of particular theoretical perspectives we shall visit. Epistemology, ontology, assumptions about the nature of the human animal, and so on are often embedded within a given theory. You may not be able to recite all these background concerns about each theory, but a discussion of them in our review should help you come to grips with the basics. Often, knowing the assumptions will determine your views on the theory itself.

Praxis and the ethics of theory/research--I personally consider having a “position” a good thing. I will try to be straightforward about my own, and ask you to try to critically evaluate your own. Neutrality really is not possible. A reasonable standard would include fairness to multiple views and openness to new information (as a scholar these are absolute minimum standards). Speak your mind—I want you to.

Standards—How do we know a good theory from a bad one? Applying quality standards to your critiques is expected. You will also find that applying them in other classes and in your intellectual career will become a necessity, as there is far too much academic schlock and kitsch out there, and you can read and read and read and find yourself falling further and further behind as the only result. Tis a “reality” of our age.

Attendance:
You are expected to attend each week unless you have a compelling reason not to be in class. The University of Kentucky recognizes official university events, health problems of your own or serious health problems among your immediate family, religious holidays or other reasons that I find acceptable. I won’t worry too much about this except to say that if you miss more than three weeks of the class without an excuse I will ask you to withdraw. All in all, I expect you to want to discuss these topics and issues with your fellow students and me. This is inherently interesting material and we will all learn more if everyone attends and provides input. You paid good money (or someone did) to provide this opportunity. I encourage you to take it.

Written assignments:
The specifics for the semester paper and any other required pieces that would fall under “class discussion” such as a one-pager in preparation for a given class period, etc. will be handed out in class.

Be very careful about citing your sources, etc. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please talk to me. The general rule would be “err on the side of caution.” Committing plagiarism can damage your reputation and career as well as cost you credit for classes taken, etc.
What follows is an approximation of the readings for class periods through the semester. If I find something better than what is originally assigned I may recommend you substitute it. Our interests may lead us to adjust the topics a bit, as well. Anyway, it isn’t set in stone but will not be changed without good reason. So:

### August 27

**Introduction to campaigns: Normative and Instrumental Issues**

Herrnson, Chapter 10


**Recommended:**

### September 3: Contexts and campaigns

**Topic overviews:**


Herrnson, Chapters 1-4; 9


**Recent research:**


**Recommended:**


September 10  Campaign Strategy

Topic overviews:
Herrnson, Chapters 6 & 7

Classic:

Recent research:

Recommended:
September 17  Candidate characteristics and campaigns

**Topic overviews:**

**Classic:**

**Recent research:**

**Recommended:**
September 24
Communications Strategy and Interpersonal Communication

Topic overviews:
Herrnson, Chapter 8

Recent research:

Recommended:
October 1 Campaign advertising

Topic overviews:

Classic studies:

Critical analyses:

Recent research:

Recommended:
Topical overview:

Classic:

Recent research:

Recommended:
<table>
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<th>October 15 News media</th>
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**Classic study:**

**Normative analysis:**

**Discussion of theoretical issues:**


**Review of research:**


**Recent studies:**


**Recommended:**


News media continued

Classic study:

Research review:

Theoretical critique:

Cultural approaches to news and campaigns:

Contemporary research:

Recommended:
October 29  Opinion media and political comedy

Topic overview:


Recent research:


Recommended:


November 5 Public Response

Classic studies:

Overview of research:

Recent research:

Recommended:


**Topic overviews:**


**Current studies:**


**Recommended:**


### November 19  Public activism

**Topic overviews:**
Herronson, Chapter 5


### December 3  Changing contexts and technologies

**Topic overview:**


**Candidate use of new technologies:**


**Research review:**

**Recent research:**


**Recommended:**

December 10  Evaluation of campaigns and suggestions for the future
Herrson, Chapter 11


**Recommended:**


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December 17  Paper presentations