SAC 404.202/PUBPOL 495/750 (4 credit hours)
Title: Producing Voter Engagement
Time: Thursday, 12-4PM
Room: 4170 North Quad

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Intended Audiences:

This meet-together course between the Screen Arts and Culture (SAC) Department in LS&A and the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy (FSPP) has as its goal increasing voter turnout among young voters, particularly college students, in November 2018. It is open to undergraduate students in SAC and to both undergraduate and graduate students in the Ford School.

SAC undergraduates interested in careers in television, film or other fields that require visual storytelling (marketing, new media, public service) will work together with undergraduate or graduate students at the Ford School of Public Policy with an interest in political participation, nonprofit organizations as clients for PSA production, and evaluation of the effectiveness of media campaigns.

Ford School students interested in political communication and voter mobilization will learn new skills in this course. Those interested in a broad range of nonprofit organizations that carry out public information programs will find this course useful for learning basic skills in using video to inform the public about their missions and their programs and to elicit their support. The attention to evaluating the results of a PSA campaign will focus on another important dimension of nonprofit outreach programs
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Content of the Course

In this project-based course students will learn how to produce Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in support of public policy objectives. Students will study, conceive and produce a Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign to inspire student voter registration and turnout for the November 2018 election. Students will analyze effective messaging campaigns and receive instruction and guidance on the messages requested by the Ford School in areas of student voter registration, education and turnout. SAC students will then work with students from the Ford School to conceptualize and produce a series of PSA and social media messages to encourage their peers to take part in the election process. The class will then analyze and study the results of the campaign in the weeks following the November election.

Students will develop expertise in the substantive areas of political participation and political communication, with a particular focus on the young voters and college students. They will also gain first-hand experience in storytelling, short video production, and effective digital communications. Throughout the semester, students will collaborate on a social media campaign with the purpose of creating awareness and delivering information that will inform and motivate young voters. After analyzing and discussing successful campaigns, PSAs and political ads, students will determine the best story format (narrative, documentary profile, etc.) to engage, inform, and incite an audience to action. Students will then go on to write and produce short videos and develop a social media distribution plan to reach their intended audience.

Students will produce videos that will be distributed through a variety of media, including social media and campus media, prior to Election Day. The short time between September 6 and November 6 will accurately simulate the common

schedule for producing public service announcements and other media that aim to motivate viewers to act in response to the message being delivered.

Videos will focus on providing basic information on the mechanics of registering and voting, on issues that are prominent in the election, and on motivating young citizens to register, become informed, and turn out on Election Day.

Class meetings will include:
- Readings focused on what social science knows about the voting habits of young people and what motivates them to participate (or not) in activities in the public sphere
- Viewing existing videos that target young voters and assessing their strengths and weaknesses
- Attention to the features of successful working relationships between clients (Ford School students) and video producers (SAC students).
- Together students will formulate plans for videos and distribute them through various channels before Election Day. This will entail learning about what works best on social media, what goes into an effective PSA, and other ways to distribute a message to the public via digital media.
- The class will also potentially produce some videos following Election Day that can be used in future campaigns to promote voting by young people.
- Students will also discuss how they might assess the impact of the videos on voter turnout, assemble a plan for doing so, and carry it out in the month following the elections.

Class Format:
Initially, the course will meet for serveral four-hour session per week of instruction, in-class discussion, and preparation for production. Once production commences, class time will be used to film and edit the PSAs. After the election, the class will reconvene to study the results of the campaign.

Course Requirements:
Assessment is based on participation (25%), peer evaluations (15%) and the final produced campaign videos (60%).

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