PubPol 423

Political Campaign Strategy & Tactics

Winter Semester, 2023

Professor Rusty Hills

Tuesday 5:30 to 8:20 p.m.

Weill Hall

Room 1210

Office Hours: I have an Open Door and Open E-mail policy.

I prefer to meet in my office, 5303 Weill Hall, at any time between 4:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m., before class begins. My office hours. But if that is not convenient, contact me by e-mail and we can discuss alternate meeting times and locations.

Phone: Cell phone (517) 648-2520

E-mail: [rustyhills@gmail.com](mailto:rustyhills@gmail.com)

Do not respond to messages in the Course Canvas.

**Course Overview**:

Welcome! This course will introduce you to the art and the (sometimes) science of political campaigning.

The purpose of PubPol 423 is to examine political campaigns and explain what happens and why. **Remember: There is no policy without victory.**

Topics to be covered include a heavy emphasis on political communications, including speeches and debates, crafting and framing a message, earned media, paid media, and social media.

PubPol 423 will also examine campaign planning and management, polling and research (why was so much of the polling in 2020 so wrong?), identifying, targeting and turning out voters, coalitions and interest groups, budgeting and fundraising, the political environment, and Get Out The Vote efforts.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **This I Believe essay**. (3-page limit) This is an essay on the core value that drives your life. Answer this question: What is most important to you? Your answer does not have to be about politics. For additional information on “This I Believe,” go to <https://thisibelieve.org>
2. A **Memo to someone who currently holds elective office**. (6 pages)
   1. You will write a memorandum to the elected official of your choice, arguing strongly in favor of one particular issue. It could be about a political issue, such as running for office. Or it could be about an issue, such as the environment, tax reform, gun control, abortion, the death penalty, drug legalization, education, charter schools, and so on.
   2. I want something interesting, something I could put in an envelope and mail to the policymaker in Washington or Lansing you have identified. With your name attached. Here are some examples:
   3. A memo to Elizabeth Warren on why she should run for President in 2024, regardless of whether President Biden seeks re-nomination or not, to re-energize the progressive left in the Democratic Party.
   4. A memo to former Michigan Governor Rick Snyder on why he should run for the U.S. Senate in 2024 and, in the process, rebuild the moderate middle of the national Republican Party.
   5. A memo to one of Michigan’s State Senators on why now is the time to push for gun control after the mass shooting at Oxford Schools.
   6. A memo to Congresswoman Debbie Dingell on why universal health care is an issue whose time has come.
   7. A memo to former Republican congressmen Fred Upton or Peter Meijer on why he should run for Governor in 2026.
   8. A memo to anyone in the Michigan legislature on why Michigan needs to adopt a Pro-Growth policy.
   9. A memo to the Detroit Mayor or a member of the Detroit City Council on how to deal with education and schools, or homelessness, or urban blight.
   10. This is an opportunity to explore, grapple with, and begin to understand diversity and the issues surrounding diversity.
   11. (6 pages)
   12. If you are struggling with what to write about, then please clear it with me **beforehand**.
3. **Book Review.** (6 pages).
   1. Review a book about politics, preferably a book written in the last 3, 4 or 5 years.
   2. For example, choose one book about the 2020 presidential election from among these three: “Lucky” by Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes, or “Frankly, We Did Win This Election,” by Michael Bender, or “I Alone Can Fix It,” by Carol Leonnig and Philip Rucker.
   3. Or books about local politics, including “!00,000 Bosses,” by Will Haskell, or “A Distant Rumble,” by GT Long.
   4. Any book about the Trump era, such as “Thank You for your Servitude,” by Mark Leibovich, or “What Were We Thinking,” by Carlos Lozada, or “Confidence Man” by Maggie Habermas.
   5. Any book about the Republicans, such as “Why We Did It,” by Tim Miller.
   6. Any book about diversity in politics, such as “Caste,” by Isabel Wilkerson or “Evicted,” by Matthew Desmond or “The Sum of Us” by Heather McGhee.
   7. Or just an interesting read, such as “Because Our Fathers Lied,” by Craig McNamara.
   8. If you have a question, please see me.
   9. Key elements of your book review:
      1. What was the main point/thesis of the book?
      2. Did you agree or disagree with the author(s)?
      3. Why or why not?
      4. Would you recommend the book?
   10. This is also an opportunity to explore, grapple with, and begin to understand diversity and the issues surrounding diversity.
   11. **If you have a question about the book you are thinking of reviewing, then consult with Professor first.**
4. **Final Project:** Write a campaign plan. : (10 pages, double-spaced)
   1. Your plan must either be a primary election or a general election. Not both.
   2. For example, you want to run for State Representative in Detroit. That means you should write a campaign plan on how to win a primary.
   3. Or you want to run a State Senate campaign in Oakland County. That could be either a primary campaign plan, or a general campaign plan. Pick one.
   4. DO NOT write a campaign for how to run for President and win 270 electoral college votes. That is too complicated for one short paper.
   5. DO NOT write about an easy election. I do not want a paper on how a Democrat wins in Ann Arbor or Detroit.
   6. Select one upcoming election in 2024 or 2026 – gubernatorial, senatorial, congressional, state senate, state house, local election or a ballot issue.
   7. Must be a real candidate or ballot issue. Not the Elf on the Shelf.
   8. It could be your own campaign. I welcome that.
   9. Then, write a ten (10) page paper that includes the following elements:
      1. Prepare a Win Number. How many votes do you need to win your election? Explain how you arrived at that number. This should not take up a lot of space, perhaps 5% of the paper.
      2. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the paper should be devoted to the following points:
         1. SWOT analysis {Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats}.
         2. Voter Coalition.
         3. Message.
         4. Vote Goals & Conclusion.
      3. The **SWOT analysis** is straightforward: list for me the various elements in each category for the candidate whom you have selected. For example, what are the candidate’s strengths? What are her or his weaknesses? Opportunities? Threats?
      4. For the **Voter Coalition** portion of your final paper, list and give a reason for the voter groups – the voters, coalitions & interest groups – that will support your candidate, and how those groups combine to achieve 50% plus one of the electorate. In other words, tell me how you plan to assemble a winning coalition. The numbers need to add up to get to your win number (or exceed your win number.).
      5. For the **Message** portion of your paper, tell me what is your candidate’s message, and why you have selected this message. Explain how you will apply your candidate’s message to the voter, coalition & interest groups you are appealing to. Why will these groups vote for you? What is your message to them?
      6. For the **Vote Goals and Conclusion** portion of your paper, add up the votes from your voter coalitions to demonstrate how you achieve your Win Number. For example, suppose your goal is 1.4 million votes. Explain how you achieve that. X% support of White voters plus Y% of Black voters. A% of union members and B% of progressive voters. Or G% of Republican base plus J% of independents and H% of Right to Life voters and M% of suburban women.
      7. I need to see a path to victory. And the numbers have to add up.
      8. If you have questions, please ask.

**Class Format:** The semester will combine lecture with class discussion, supplemented with guest lecturers. Questions are not only welcomed; they are essential to deciphering this interesting but complicated thing we call politics.

**Required Texts: “Political Campaigning in the U.S.,” by David A. Jones. And a recent political book of your choice to be read and reviewed.** But the real textbook will be each days’ headlines and news stories that pertain to politics and government.

Because you are a student at the University of Michigan Ford School, I expect you to be conversant with national and state politics. The New York Times and Washington Post are excellent resources for national politics. I also recommend the Politico, Bridge magazine, and Governing magazine websites. The Detroit Free Press and Detroit News, and the Michigan state government reports, Gongwer and MIRS, provide solid coverage of state politics. UM has access to MIRS. Read the news each day and come prepared.

**Help with Writing:** We areblessed to have an outstanding Writing Center at the Ford School, and I would encourage students to take advantage of all the services that the Center offers. For more information, I would direct you to [www.fordschool.umich.edu/writing-center/](http://www.fordschool.umich.edu/writing-center/)

**Course Requirements:**  Attendance is required.  Student participation is critical to understanding the material, and therefore it will be a percentage of your final grade.   Students are expected to finish assignments on time, be prepared for the weekly discussions and topics, participate in discussions, AND be respectful of the opinions of all other students and guests.

NOTE:  Even if you miss a class, **all assignments are** still **due on the date assigned**.

What does that mean?

* Your grade will be lowered for each class period that an assignment is not handed in.
* In other words, missing a class is not an excuse for failing to complete an assignment.

**Ford School of Public Policy Inclusivity Statement**

Members of the Ford School community represent a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. We are committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

* share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
* be open to the views of others
* honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
* appreciate the opportunity that we have to learn from each other in this community
* value one another’s opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
* keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature
* use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in Ford classes and across the UM community

**Ford School Public Health Protection Policy**

In order to participate in any in-person aspects of this course--including meeting with other students to study or work on a team project--you must follow all the public health safety measures and policies put in place by the State of Michigan, Washtenaw County, the University of Michigan, and the Ford School. Up to date information on U-M policies can be found here. It is expected that you will protect and enhance the health of everyone in the Ford School community by staying home and following self-isolation guidelines if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, or are awaiting a test result because of symptoms. If you do not have a verified COVID-19 vaccine report in the U-M vaccination report system, you are required to participate in weekly testing if you intend to come to campus for any reason.

**Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources**

The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students.  We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impacts students’ academic performance.

If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, counseling and mental health services are available. For help, contact [Counseling and Psychological Services](https://caps.umich.edu/) (CAPS) and/or [University Health Service](https://www.uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs) (UHS). This includes the [Ford School embedded CAPS counselor](https://caps.umich.edu/article/caps-embedded-staff).

For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit: <http://umich.edu/~mhealth/>.

In a crisis or emergency, students can call the CAPS Counselor on Duty at 734-764-8312 during business hours, or the same number and then press 0 after hours.   Click [here](https://caps.umich.edu/article/um-mental-health-resources) for a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you believe you need an accommodation for a disability, please let your instructor know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of courses may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make your instructor aware of your needs, they can work with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office to help determine appropriate academic accommodations. Any information you provide will be treated as private and confidential. Other information of Ford School norms/expectations and resources for students can be found at:  <http://fordschool.umich.edu/academics/expectation>

**Grading:**  Students will be graded on class participation and the successful completion of the four individual assignments:  essay, memo, book review and final assignment, with the final assignment weighted more heavily.

Grade               Points             Percentage

A                     4.0                   94-100

A-                    3.7                   93-90

B+                   3.3                   89-86

B                      3.0                   85-80

B-                    2.7                   79-75

C+                   2.3                   74-70

C                     2.0                   69-64

D+                   1.3                   59-56

D                     1.0                   55-52

D-                    0.7                   51-50

E                      0.0                   Less than 50

**Plagiarism:**  In a word -- Don't!  Plagiarism is grounds for failing the class. The University of Michigan and the Ford School take this offense seriously.

TOPIC SCHEDULE\*

January 10

Class Overview

Review of syllabus, all assignments and expectations, topics to be covered, questions answered.

Read:

1. **The Front-Runner’s Fall, by Joshua Green, The Atlantic.**
2. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/09/the-front-runner-s-fall/306944/
3. **Read Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Michelle Nunn’s Campaign Plan, from the Washington Post.**
4. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/07/28/how-to-read-the-leaked-michelle-nunn-campaign-plan/>
5. **Political Campaigning, David Jones, Chapter 1.**

January 17

Campaign Planning & Management

All the elements of a political campaign.

Strategy (Your overarching path to victory).

Tactics (how to implement your strategy.)

SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

1. **Assignment #1**: **This I Believe essay**. (3-page limit) This is an essay on the core value that drives your life. Answer this question: What is most important to you? Your answer does not have to be about politics. For additional information on “This I Believe,” go to <https://thisibelieve.org>

Go to NPR web site and review "This I Believe" essays.  Then, write your own personal political testament, your own "This I Believe." **Due date:  January 31**

January 24

Crafting a Message, Message Development & Branding

Targeting messages.

Different messages, different audiences, different mediums, different timing.

Big Picture.  Framing.  Going on offense, setting the agenda.

January 31

Speeches & Debates

Tips & tricks of the trade for crafting successful speeches and for winning debates.

**Assignment #1 is DUE.**

**Assignment # 2:**

1. A **Memo to someone who currently holds elective office**. (6 pages)
   1. You will write a memorandum to the elected official of your choice, (to be submitted to me), arguing strongly in favor of one particular issue. It could be about a political issue, such as running for office. Or it could be about an issue, such as the environment, tax reform, gun control, abortion, the death penalty, drug legalization, education, charter schools, and so on.
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   7. A memo to former Republican congressmen Fred Upton or Peter Meijer on why he should run for Governor in 2026.
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   10. This is an opportunity to explore, grapple with, and begin to understand diversity and the issues surrounding diversity.
   11. (6 pages)
   12. If you are struggling with what to write about, then please clear it with me **beforehand**.

**Due Date:  February 21**

**Read: Political Campaigning, Chapter 5, Paid Media.**

February 7

Paid Media

Television, cable, day parts, radio, direct mail, Internet, newspaper.  Comparative communications (Negative ads).

Who defines whom?  And who gets there first?

**Read: Political Campaigning, Chapter 4, Earned Media**

February 14

Earned Media

Generating press and media coverage without paying for it. Press releases, debates, speeches, newspaper and other endorsements.  How to deal with the press? Can you?

**Read: Political Campaigning, Chapter 6, Social Media.**

February 21

Social & Digital Media

The new communications. How has the changing nature of communications, new media, digital and social media, affected campaigns?

Digital Data. How do we mine data, and what is the most effective use of data?

**Assignment #2 is DUE.**

**Assignment #3:**  **Book Review.** (6 pages).

* 1. Review a book about politics, preferably a book written in the last 3, 4 or 5 years.
  2. For example, choose one book about the 2020 presidential election from among these three: “Lucky” by Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes, or “Frankly, We Did Win This Election,” by Michael Bender, or “I Alone Can Fix It,” by Carol Leonnig and Philip Rucker.
  3. Or books about local politics, including “!00,000 Bosses,” by Will Haskell, or “A Distant Rumble,” by GT Long.
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  7. Or just an interesting read, such as “Because Our Fathers Lied,” by Craig McNamara.
  8. If you have a question, please see me.
  9. Key elements of your book review:
     1. What was the main point/thesis of the book?
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**Due Date: March 21**

**Read: Political Campaigning, Chapter 3, Voter and Candidate Research.**

February 28

Spring Break

March 7

Polling & Research

1. Polling as a snapshot in time. What polling can do, what polling cannot do. Why bother to pay for polling if every media outlet is already polling?

2. Research. Know yourself, your strength and weaknesses; know your opponent, strength and weaknesses; know your voters, your state, your environment, your issues.

**Read: Political Campaigning, Chapters 2 and 7, Targeting, Persuasion and Mobilization, and The Ground Game.**

March 14

Voter Contact I

Identifying, differentiating, targeting & turning out Voters.

Microtargeting. Who are our voters, and how in the world do we find them?

March 21

Book Review

**Assignment #3 is DUE.**

**Assignment #4**

**Final Project**: Write a campaign plan.

1. Your plan must either be a primary election or a general election. Not both.
2. For example, you want to run for State Representative in Detroit. That means you should write a campaign plan on how to win a primary.
3. Or you want to run a State Senate campaign in Oakland County. That could be either a primary campaign plan, or a general campaign plan. Pick one.
4. DO NOT write a campaign for how to run for President and win 270 electoral college votes. That is too complicated for one short paper.
5. DO NOT write about an easy election. I do not want a paper on how a Democrat wins in Ann Arbor or Detroit.
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7. Must be a real candidate or ballot issue. Not the Elf on the Shelf.
8. It could be your own campaign. I welcome that.
9. Then, write a ten (10) page paper that includes the following elements:
   * 1. Prepare a Win Number. How many votes do you need to win your election? Explain how you arrived at that number. This should not take up a lot of space, perhaps 5% of the paper.
     2. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the paper should be devoted to the following points:
        1. SWOT analysis {Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats}.
        2. Voter Coalition.
        3. Message.
        4. Vote Goals & Conclusion.
     3. The **SWOT analysis** is straightforward: list for me the various elements in each category for the candidate whom you have selected. For example, what are the candidate’s strengths? What are her or his weaknesses? Opportunities? Threats?
     4. For the **Voter Coalition** portion of your final paper, list and give a reason for the voter groups – the voters, coalitions & interest groups – that will support your candidate, and how those groups combine to achieve 50% plus one of the electorate. In other words, tell me how you plan to assemble a winning coalition. The numbers need to add up to get to your win number (or exceed your win number.).
     5. For the **Message** portion of your paper, tell me what is your candidate’s message, and why you have selected this message. Explain how you will apply your candidate’s message to the voter, coalition & interest groups you are appealing to. Why will these groups vote for you? What is your message to them?
     6. For the **Vote Goals and Conclusion** portion of your paper, add up the votes from your voter coalitions to demonstrate how you achieve your Win Number. For example, suppose your goal is 1.4 million votes. Explain how you achieve that. X% support of White voters plus Y% of Black voters. A% of union members and B% of progressive voters. Or G% of Republican base plus J% of independents and H% of Right to Life voters and M% of suburban women.
     7. I need to see a path to victory. And the numbers have to add up.
     8. If you have questions, please ask.

**DUE DATE: April 18**

**Read Political Campaigning, Chapter 8, Fundraising.**

March 28

Fundraising, Budgeting & Scheduling

The not very glamorous, but absolutely essential elements of all winning campaigns. How to raise money, 101. Strategic scheduling (P.S. Don’t ever be the Scheduler!)

April 4

Case Studies

A deeper dive into previous elections, and why decisions were made,

* For example, the 2018 gubernatorial election: Schuette, Calley, Whitmer, and El-Sayed campaigns for Governor in 2018 as illustrations of the principles discussed in class.
* Looking back – Lessons from history.
* Looking ahead – what will the number 1 issue be in the next election?
* Coalitions and interest groups.
* Crisis Management. When crises hit – and they will – how to respond?

April 11

Transition to Power

The votes have been counted. The election is over. Now it is time to transition from campaigning to governing. What needs to be done, and who should do it?

Is policy really personnel? Should all campaign staff transition to public service? What’s most important? How are issues sequenced? Must all campaign promises be fulfilled?

April 18

Lessons Learned

**Assignment #4 is DUE.**

**\*NOTE**:  The dates on which topics are to be covered are subject to change, but **assignment due dates** will **remain the same**.