

## Politics and Communication

CSS/PSC 4310

Fall 2011

Castellaw 138

Martin J. Medhurst

Marrs McLean 213

Office Hours: T 2:00-5:00; W 2:00-5:00; and by appt.

710-7840

[Martin\\_Medhurst@Baylor.edu](mailto:Martin_Medhurst@Baylor.edu)

**Course Description:** The phrase “politics and communication” can mean many different things. This semester, it is going to mean retrospective study of the 2008 presidential campaign and prospective study of the unfolding 2012 presidential campaign, with special reference to campaign structure, function, and communication with the general public, as well as with specialized publics. Our main focus will be on the role of communication in the presidential campaign. We will examine various genres of discourse, including acceptance and keynote speeches, stump speeches, convention films, campaign ads, presidential and vice presidential debates, internet campaigning, blogs, and television news. We will also consider the interface between mass communication and interpersonal/group communication. Our focus through the first week in November will be exclusively on the presidential campaign. The last month of the course will cover important issues in campaigns and elections from a more general and theoretical point of view.

### Required Textbooks:

Craig Allen Smith, *Presidential Campaign Communication: The Quest for the White House* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010)

Nelson W. Polsby, Aaron Wildavsky, Steven E. Schier, and David A. Hopkins, *Presidential Elections*, 13<sup>th</sup> ed. (Rowman and Littlefield, 2011)

Stephen J. Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?* 4th ed. (CQ Press, 2011)

### Course Evaluation:

Mid-Term Exam	25%	(October 18)
Group Presentation	25%	(October 25-Nov. 8)
Individual Research Paper	25%	(December 1)
Final Exam	25%	(December 12, 2-4)

## Course Requirements:

- 1) Mid-Term Exam. The mid-term will cover all of the readings and class lectures up to and including the day of the exam—October 18.
- 2) *Group Presentation*. During the first week, the class will be divided into nine groups—one each for the eight major contenders for the Republican nomination and a ninth for President Obama. These groups do not represent whom you favor, but rather who you have been randomly assigned to study for the semester. Each of these groups will give an in-class oral presentation according to the following schedule: Romney and Bachmann groups (October 25); Perry and Gingrich groups (October 27); Palwenty and Cain groups (November 1); Paul and Huntsman groups (November 3); and Obama group (November 8). Individual members of each group will contribute to their respective presentation by researching one or more of the following topics:

Candidate's standard stump speech from September 1-October 20  
Candidate's major policy addresses from September 1-October 20  
Network and Cable TV ads produced by the candidate's campaign  
Network and Cable TV ads produced by so-called 527 Groups  
Viral videos on the Internet  
Candidate debates  
Campaign web pages  
Political Blogs—1) dailykos.com, 2) salon.com, and 3) politico.com  
Political Blogs—1) nationalreview.com, 2) drudgereport.com, and 3) worldnetdaily.com  
Polling by the Gallup Organization  
Internal polling by the candidate's campaign  
Fundraising methods and tactics  
The official internet campaign conducted by the candidate's organization  
The unofficial internet campaign conducted by everyone else  
Campaign scheduling and travel  
Campaign strategy, with a focus on the message component  
Campaign strategy, with a focus on the targeted audiences component  
Campaign strategy, with a focus on the primary map and the accumulation of delegates  
Campaign news coverage on the major broadcast media: CBS, NBC, ABC  
Campaign news coverage on the major cable news outlets: FOX News, CNN, MSNBC  
Campaign news coverage in the papers of record: *New York Times*, *Washington Post*  
Campaign news coverage in *Time* and *Newsweek*

Each person in the group is to be assigned one or more of the above topics. Each person's job is to research that topic or those topics for the purpose of contributing knowledge and expertise to the group's oral, in-class presentation. Each group must decide how the oral presentation is to be made. The presentation can be made by as few as one person from the group or as many as the entire group—or any number in between. The task of each group is to plan and execute a 35-minute presentation, using the most effective media and techniques available.

- 3) *Individual Research Paper*. You are to select a topic directly related to campaigns and elections and write a 12 page research paper in which you a) review the current state of knowledge on the topic, b) make an argument about the topic, and c) support that argument through citation of relevant research findings. To do this successfully, you will need to consult at least four books and at least six scholarly articles—a minimum of ten sources. Scholarly journals that regularly publish on topics related to campaigns and elections include *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *Political Communication*, *Journal of Communication*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and the *Journal of Language and Politics*, among many others. The electronic databases “Communication and Mass Media Complete” and “JSTOR” are the best places to begin.

If you are a graduate student, then this research paper should be 20 pages.

- 4) *Final Exam*. The final exam will cover the readings and class lectures since the mid-term exam, with a heavy emphasis on the book by Stephen J. Wayne, *Is This Any Way to Run a Democratic Election?*

**Exam Date and Time: December 12: 2:00-4:00 pm**

## Syllabus

### Week 1

August 23 Introduction to Political Campaign Persuasion

### Building Blocks of Presidential Campaigning

August 25 Voters  
READ: PWSH, 1-24; Wayne, 23-55.



## **Week 6**

September 27      Campaign Journalism  
READ: Smith, 113-127

September 29      Advertising Candidates  
READ: Smith, 128-146

## **Week 7**

October 4            Televised Presidential Debates  
READ: Smith, 147-166

October 6            Using New Media  
READ: Smith, 167-186; Wayne, 200-228

## **Stages of the Campaign**

## **Week 8**

October 11          Surfacing Stage  
READ: Smith, 189-206

October 13          Nomination Stage  
READ: Smith, 207-222; Wayne, 173-199

## **Week 9**

October 18          **Mid-Term Exam Today**

October 20          Consolidation and Election Stages  
READ: Smith, 223-264

## **Week 10**

October 25 Day #1 of Group Oral Presentations: Romney and Bachmann

October 27 Day #2 of Group Oral Presentations: Perry and Gingrich

## **Week 11**

November 1 Day #3 of Group Oral Presentations: Palwenty and Cain  
**Read: P&W, 5-50.**

November 3 Day #4 of Group Oral Presentations: Paul and Huntsman

## **Week 12**

November 8 Day #5 of Group Oral Presentations: Obama

November 10 Democratic Elections: What's the Problem?  
READ: Wayne, 1-22; PWSH, 209-240

## **Week 13**

November 15 Has Money Corrupted Our Election Process?  
READ: Wayne, 88-114

November 17 No Class Today. I will be at the National Communication Association Convention in New Orleans.

## **Week 14**

November 22 News Media: Watchdog or Pit Bull?  
READ: Wayne, 115-147

November 24 No class. Thanksgiving holiday.

## **Week 15**

November 29      Are American Parties Still Relevant or Representative?  
READ: Wayne, 148-172

December 1      Elections and Government in America  
READ: Wayne, 229-257; PWSH, 241-252

December 12      **Final Exam: 2:00-4:00**