

PPHA 33910 Digital Media in Policy and Politics: Practices, Problems and Policy Issues

Basic Information and Resources

Instructor Contact Info:

Cell Phone: (202) 997-6357

Email: xxx@uchicago.edu

Communication With the Instructor

Please use my contact information as needed. Email is easiest; text is next best. I will respond quickly. If you wish to set up a meeting, Sunday evenings or Mondays after class are easiest, or we can arrange a meeting via Google Hangout at other times if that proves more convenient for you.

Expectations Outside of Class Sessions

Digital media is a dynamic space. There are changes on a daily, sometimes hourly, basis. It requires ongoing awareness and engagement in the field to fully grasp the policy issues and the practices surrounding these tools. Therefore, you will be expected to monitor the news, social media feeds and academic sources for ongoing developments surrounding digital media and its uses in the policy and political field.

This expectation will be reflected in the course evaluation and grading, outlined below.

Class Description

PPHA 33910 Digital Media in Policy and Politics: Practices, Problems and Policy Issues

Policymakers and political practitioners are grappling with a wide variety of issues surrounding digital media, in part because of the 2016 election.

This course will be divided into three broad categories: 1.) Current policy issues, 2.) Digital media's application in a political context, 3.) Emerging issues in the news about digital media.

Sessions on policy issues will include discussions on foreign influence in the 2016 election, antitrust issues for tech companies, implications of tech company policies on free speech, changing definitions of “news”, explorations of privacy, appropriate requirements for transparency and disclosure surrounding digital spending in campaigns, and other topics.

Sessions on digital media’s application in the political arena will include discussions about best practices for digital media, the various platforms widely in use—and their strength and weaknesses, implications for approaches to creative, an extended exploration of targeting options, methods for building digital budgets, reporting and measures of campaign success, and the ways digital media is used for voter engagement and organizing, fundraising, person and mobilization.

For the sessions on emerging issues, students will be expected to monitor the news and social media to help identify relevant topics for class discussion and come to class prepared to discuss them.

Course Learning Objectives

Students can expect to come away from the course with:

- An understanding of major policy issues facing the use of digital media in the political and advocacy space.
- A practical understanding of the platforms widely in use and some typical applications.
- Given that the class will take place during a presidential cycle where candidates are using these tools,
 - they can expect to learn to critically analyze how these tools are being used in those campaigns.
- In addition, students will be expected to apply this learning to the production of a digital plan for a candidate or policy issue—including proposed tactics and creative approaches.

Class Readings

A detailed reading list for each class period will be provided two weeks prior to the class meeting in which those materials will be discussed.

Course Evaluation Measures

Major Course Project

Students will be expected to apply their in-class learning to the production of a digital plan for a candidate or policy issue.

The plan should include:

- Background on the candidate or policy providing appropriate context to evaluate the plan
- Key messages, by targeted audience in the form of talking points
 - Voter segments
 - Opinion elite
 - Policy decision-makers
 - Etc.
- Potential messaging and creative approaches
 - By digital media platform — considering the strengths and weaknesses of each for your intended purpose
- Sample creative--in the form of scripts, slides as storyboards or fully-produced creative.
- Targeting approaches to reach the intended audiences of the digital media plan.

Collaboration is permitted. If someone else in the class has strengths you don't have, feel free to collaborate just as you would in a political or policy context. However, this is not a "team" or "joint" assignment and each student must submit a separate completed project.

Preliminary Draft Course Project

20% of course grade

Week 5, November 4, 2019

Feedback will be provided by November 18, 2019

The project will be evaluated based on the initial concepts and outlines for the digital media plan. Feedback will be provided and the final project should show significant additional effort over the preliminary draft.

Final Course project

40% of course grade

Week 10, December 9, 2019

Analysis of candidate email, social or ad program

10% of course grade

Week 9, December 2, 2019

Students will be expected to monitor the email, social media or ad campaigns of a candidate for president. They will then be asked to provide a 3-5 page summary and analysis of the program

and discuss significant features of the program—including tactics used, strategies identified, key messages that are regularly reinforced, style of creative, etc.

Emerging issue analysis

30% of course grade

Weekly submission

12p.m. Sunday, the day before class meets

Weeks 2-10

Students will be expected to monitor ongoing development impact digital media businesses, policy developments or innovations in how digital media tools are being deployed in a policy or political context.

Students will be asked to identify a relevant paper, news article or social media post and provide a few paragraphs of analysis that:

- Identifies an emerging issue in the field
- A brief articulation of the potential significance of the emerging issue
- And a brief discussion of the ways that issue ties into our previous or upcoming class discussions

Guest Lecturer Bio: Roy Temple, Partner, GPS Impact

Roy Temple is a veteran political, public affairs and digital strategist from the great state of Missouri and a co-founder of GPS Impact. Temple got started in digital as a blogger in 2005 when he helped found Fired Up! Missouri — recognized by the Washington Post as an outstanding local political blog.

Temple has served as a chief of staff to both a governor and a U.S. Senator. He also served as executive director for Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf's transition.

He has served on the digital and/or strategy teams for Governor Mel Carnahan, Senator Jean Carnahan, Governor Bob Holden, Senator Sherrod Brown, Senator Al Franken, Governor Tom Wolf, Governor Roy Cooper and for Priorities USA.

Temple has also assisted with crisis communications, including for natural disasters, plane crashes, recount litigation and political "scandals."

Temple is a former Chair of the Missouri Democratic Party and is an attorney.

Tentative Course Calendar

All class meetings, except the first and last, will be broken into three blocks (A, B, and C).

- **Block A** will be a discussion of a major policy issue or dynamic around the business or use of digital media.
- **Block B** will be a discussion about the practices of digital media in the policy and policy realm.
- **Block C** will be a discussion of emerging issues in digital media and will be driven largely by required student topic submissions.

October 7, 2019

Week 1

Block A

- Course overview—including a survey of the current policy questions around digital media.
- Discussion of the class participation, the class project and the weekly emerging issues submission requirement.

Block B

- Survey of digital media tools used in political campaigns
- Discussion about the scope and scale of political spending on digital media

Block C

- What happened in the 2016 election?

October 14, 2019

Week 2

Block A

- Policy responses to the 2016 election
- Disclosures and transparency approaches
- Legislative remedies

Block B

- A deeper dive into the key platforms used in political campaigns
 - Google
 - Facebook
 - Twitter

- Including strengths and weaknesses of each platform according to the campaign's purpose

Block C

- Emerging issue discussion

October 21, 2019

Week 3

Block A

- Privacy issues in digital media
 - Issues and challenges
 - Proposed legislation

Block B

- Targeting 1 - Types of targeting
 - Geographic
 - Demographic
 - Remarketing
 - Behavioral
 - Third party data
 - First party data
 - Uses of programmatic buying platforms

Block C

- Emerging issue discussion

October 28, 2019

Week 4

Block A

- Free speech issues
 - The role of digital media companies in regulating certain types of speech
 - Proposed legislation

Block B

- Targeting 2 - The Mechanics of targeting

- A “behind the scenes” look at the various buying tools and approaches to targeting for political campaigns

Block C

- Emerging issue discussion

November 4, 2019

Week 5

Block A

- The changing definitions of news in a digital media environment
 - What is fake news?
 - What is a new organization?
 - Campaign finance implications of these distinctions

Block B

- Creative challenges in digital media
 - Ways audiences engage with content online
 - Implications for how to engage audiences with digital-first creative
 - Advantages and disadvantages of various creative approaches
 - Difference across platforms
 - The ways creative across platforms can have mutually reinforcing benefits for the advertiser
 - The differences with TV advertising

Block C

- Emerging issue discussion

Deadline for submission of preliminary class project: 5p.m. November 4, 2019

November 11, 2019

Week 6

Block A

- Anti-trust issues with digital media companies
 - FTC actions and legislative proposals
- Ways digital media companies are similar and distinct from other industries that have drawn anti-trust scrutiny

Block B

- Evaluating real-world creative
 - What works?
 - What doesn't?
 - In what context?
 - And why?
 - How is this different from what you'd expect to see on TV?

Block C

- Emerging issue discussion

November 18, 2019

Week 7

Block A

- Media convergence
 - Where will TV end and digital media begin?
 - How long will that distinction even matter?
- What are the considerations around this for the business-side of digital media and for the those hoping to use digital media as communications tools?

Block B

- Measuring and Reporting success
 - Metrics and reporting for digital media
 - Using data exhaust as a research tool

Block C

- Emerging issue discussion

November 25, 2019

Week 8

Block A

- The DNC's Small Donor Debate Criteria
 - How did campaigns behave?
 - Did this distort their behavior from what it might have been otherwise?

Block B

- Digital media for online fundraising
 - Approaches
 - Tools
 - ActBlue
 - WinRed
 - Donor data analysis
 - What do we know?
 - Is it what you'd expect?

Block C

- Emerging issue discussion

December 2, 2019

Week 9

Block A

- Private and semi-private networks and tools
 - Mark Zuckerberg's "evolution" on privacy and how his platforms will be uses.
 - What are the policy implications of "mass privacy?"
 - Public officials using private tools
 - ICE discussion groups on Facebook

Block B

- A survey of digital organizing tools and best practices

Block C

- Emerging issue discussion

Deadline for submission of candidate email, social or ad program: 5p.m. December 9, 2019

December 9, 2019

Week 10

Block A

- Innovations in the use of digital media
- Innovations by President Trump's campaign

- Innovations by other presidential campaigns and candidates

Block B

- Emerging issue discussion

Block C

- Class summary and overview

Deadline for final class project: 5p.m. December 9, 2019