

Georgetown University, Master of Professional Studies

Mobilizing the Masses: Grassroots Communications

MPPR 780, Spring 2010, 5:30 – 7:30 pm Tuesday
Professor Joseph LaMountain
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1. Course Description

The 2008 Obama campaign proved that grassroots communication leads to political success. Advocacy organizations have known this for years, but now businesses leaders are using the same tactics to market their products and services. We will examine the history and theory of grassroots communications, examine the Obama campaign and other case studies, and learn to develop objectives, strategies and tactics that can result in the mass mobilization of voters, advocates and consumers.

2. Course Objectives

By the end of this class, students can expect to:

- Understand the history and theory of grassroots communications
- Identify what makes grassroots communications effective
- Develop grassroots communications objectives, strategies and tactics
- Evaluate grassroots campaigns
- Envision possible futures for grassroots communications

3. Required Books

In addition to the books listed below, additional readings may be assigned through the course of the semester (detailed in the course schedule):

- Alinsky, S. *Rules for Radicals*. Random House, New York, 1971.
- Blodgett, J. and Lofy, B., *Winning Your Election the Wellstone Way*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008.
- Cialdini, R., *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Collins Business, New York, 2007.
- Gladwell, M., *The Tipping Point*, Little, Brown and Company, New York, 2002.
- Libert, B. and Faulk, R., *Barack, Inc*, FT Press, New Jersey, 2009.
- Luntz, F., *Words that Work*, Hyperion, New York, 2007.

4. Course Schedule

Week 1: January 19	<p>What is this Course All About?</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> We will review the syllabus and class policies and discuss what we mean by grassroots communications. We will also examine elements of the 2008 Obama campaign. We will also take time to share our backgrounds, interests and what we expect to learn from taking this course.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Barack, Inc.</i>, pages 58-104
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<p>Week 2: January 26</p>	<p>History and Origins of Grassroots Communications</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> We will examine historical examples of grassroots communications, both political, electoral and from the business community. We will discuss what they have in common, and what differentiates the good from the bad.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/chap1b.html (Social Causes of the French Revolution, Center for History and New Media, George Mason University and the City University of New York). • http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/chap11a.html (Songs of the Revolution, Center for History and New Media, George Mason University and the City University of New York). • Browse: http://libx.bsu.edu/collection.php?CISOROOT=/FrnchRev (Pamphlets of the French Revolution, Ball State University).
<p>Week 3: February 2</p>	<p>Current Thinking in Grassroots Communications</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> How do ideas and information spread? What is the basic reason for grassroots communications? Are new technologies enhancing, or hindering, our ability to communicate? Why and how are businesses starting to use it?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Tipping Point</i>
<p>Week 4: February 9</p> <p><u>DUE:</u> Reaction Paper #1</p>	<p>The Holy Grail: Objectives, Strategies and Tactics</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> What are the definitions and differences between objectives, strategy and tactics? Why are they critical to the success of your grassroots communications plan? How can you align your goals, strategies and tactics?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://jamesfallows.theatlantic.com/archives/2008/09/on_strategy_and_tactics.php (“On Strategy and Tactics” by James Fallows, <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>). • http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0111-20.htm (“Dr. King’s Teachings on Strategy and Tactics,” by Paul Rockwell). • http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/uselection2008/democrats/2548253/Hillary-Clintons-failed-strategy-inspired-by-Margaret-Thatcher.html (“Hillary Clinton’s Failed Strategy,” <i>The Daily Telegraph</i>, London, August 12, 2008). • http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-op-crowley8-2008jun08,0,4704891.story (“What Undid Hillary Clinton”, <i>The Los Angeles Times</i>, June 8, 2008).
<p>Week 5: February 16</p>	<p>Why Political Campaigns Matter</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> Politicians, through political campaigns, have mastered the art of effective grassroots communication. We’ll discuss how to organize and execute a successful campaign for elective office and what interest groups and industry can learn from them.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Winning your Election the Wellstone Way</i>, pages 21-116

<p>Week 6: February 23</p>	<p>Interest Groups and Businesses</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> How are nonprofit interest groups using grassroots to achieve their objectives? Is there a role for grassroots in activities other than political advocacy? Fundraising? How are businesses using grassroots communications to achieve their objectives?</p>
<p>Week 7: March 2</p> <p><u>DUE:</u> Reaction Paper #2</p>	<p>Developing a Winning Message Platform</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> Words have the power to motivate and inspire. When developing a message platform, you need to consider carefully the power of the words. What are you trying to say? Who are you trying to reach and influence? How can you create a concise, clear message while retaining maximum flexibility? What about proof points?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Words that Work</i>, Introduction, War of Words, Chapters 1-3, 7 and 8.
<p>Week 8: March 9</p>	<p>No Class / Spring Break</p>
<p>Week 8: March 16</p>	<p>Become a Communications Czar</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> The most essential element of a successful grassroots communications is the ability to communicate well. We will discuss the relative value of various forms of communication, developing an effective communications plan, tactics for securing media coverage and word of mouth “buzz” about your candidate, issue or product.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rules for Radicals</i>, pages 81-97 • <i>Barack, Inc.</i>, pages 16-58
<p>Week 9: March 23</p>	<p>Interactive Communications: Promise and Peril</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> The Internet has dramatically altered how we communicate. Email, YouTube and Twitter and other social networking tools make it easy to reach your audience. But how do you make them listen? And how do you get noticed in this new, content-overloaded environment? We will discuss how to effectively use interactive technologies and the continued importance of old school communications devices like the telephone.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oshinsky, D., <i>Polio: An American Story</i> (excerpt to be provided).
<p>Week 10: March 30</p>	<p>Creating and Implementing Tactics</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> You have an objective and a strategy. How do you get people to respond and take the desired action? We will examine ways to motivate people to take action, successful tactics for engaging customers, advocates and voters, and the use of incentives.</p>

	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rules for Radicals</i>, pages 126-148 • <i>Influence</i>, pages 1-56 (and skim 57-280)
<p>Week 11: April 6</p> <p><u>DUE:</u> Group Letter</p>	<p>Special Guest Lecturer</p> <p>Toni Andrews Director of Marketing, Burke and Herbert Bank</p> <p>Toni will discuss the Alexandria bank's grassroots communications strategies. How does a small business create a brand identity? What are some successful campaigns launched by the bank? How does a community bank wind up on SNL and GMA? What have been the challenges in implementing a grassroots communications campaign?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B&H marketing materials to be provided electronically.
<p>Week 12: April 13</p>	<p>Presentation of Group Projects</p>
<p>Week 13 April 20</p>	<p>Measurement and Evaluation</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> It takes times and money to create, launch and implement a grassroots campaign. How will you know if it's working? Do you take a poll? Do you need focus groups beforehand? We'll discuss a number of different mechanisms, but quantitative and qualitative, that can determine if your efforts are on track for achieving their short, medium and long-term goals.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Word of Mouth Marketing</i>, pages 183-193
<p>Week 14 April 27</p>	<p>Special Guest Lecturer</p> <p>Peggy Tighe Partner, Strategic Health Care</p> <p>Peggy will discuss the role of grassroots communications in legislative and issue advocacy campaigns. Specifically, she will related her personal experiences in the 1994 health care reform debate which contributed to its ultimate defeat.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be provided prior to class <p>Individual Proposal Due</p>

5. Assignments

I. Class Participation (25 points)

Students are expected to complete the weekly readings and participate in our weekly meetings. This is not a “lecture” class, but one that relies on your participation. Participants will receive a grade based on the “quantity” of your involvement and the “quality” of your comments and remarks.

II. Reaction Paper #1 (50 points)

The Reaction Paper #1 is due by week 4. It should be 2-3 pages and examine the grassroots communications elements of a current event. For example, you might want to examine the role of grassroots communications in the runaway success of a new product. Your assignment is not to restate the event, but to analyze the situation, discuss the role of grassroots communications (or lack thereof) and provide arguments based on what you have learned in class.

III. Reaction Paper #2 (50 points)

The Reaction Paper #2 is due by week 7. It should be a one-page summary of the objective, strategies and tactics for a current grassroots communications campaign. For example, you might want to break down the way in which Apple is using word-of-mouth marketing to sell its products. Or you could examine the ways in which Greenpeace is using grassroots communications to address climate change. Please also include a brief paragraph or two of analysis (e.g. “Is it working?”)

IV. Group Letter (75 points)

Participants will form teams and develop a business letter addressed to the CEO of a company, organization or a political candidate of their choice. The letter will analyze an issue currently affecting the target organization and propose a solution with suggested strategies and tactics. The main content of the letter should be 2-3 pages in length. Each team will pitch their proposal (5-10 minutes) to the CEO and class “Board of Directors” during week 12. The written letter will account for 2/3 of the grade while the group presentation will account for 1/3 of the grade.

V. Individual Proposal (100 points)

The Individual Proposal is a 5- to 7-page proposal addressed to a candidate, organization or company. The proposal will analyze an issue currently affecting the target organization and offer a comprehensive solution along with suggested strategies and tactics. The Individual Proposal is due by week 14.

6. Grading

Assignment	Due	Points
Class Participation	Weekly	25
Reaction paper #1	Week 4	50
Reaction Paper #2	Week 7	50
Group Letter	Week 11	75
Individual Proposal	Week 14	100
Total		300

7. Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. If circumstances preclude you from attending a class or arriving on time, please notify me prior to the start of class by text, cell or email. Missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level. Special circumstances should be discussed with me ahead of time.

8. Class Policies

- Readings in any given week correspond to the discussion taking place that week. In other words,

be prepared to discuss the readings listed that week's class.

- Please submit assignments on paper and electronically to joseph.lamountain@gmail.com.
- Late work will be dropped one grade for each day it is late. If you have extenuating circumstances speak with me before the due date. Work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date.
- I will not offer incomplete grades save in the most exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances. Job requirements do not qualify.
- Grammar, spelling and proper citations matter. Your ideas matter more.
- You are responsible for classroom information. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with your classmates to get class notes.

9. Ethics Statement and Honor Pledge

As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor Pledge, and indeed as good scholars and citizens you are expected to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of this course. You are expected to be familiar with the letter and spirit of the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System and on the Honor Council website. As faculty, I too am obligated to uphold the Honor System and report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty. For more information, please visit:
<http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/he/index/html>

10. Academic Resource Center

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center (arc@Georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies. All such accommodations must be arranged through the Center, not directly with me.

11. Grading Scale

The Georgetown University grading scale, in a 300-point format, is as follows:

- A 282-300
- A- 270-281.9
- B+ 264-269.9
- B 252-263.9
- B- 240-251.9
- C 210-239.9
- F 209.9 and below