**Seminar in**

**Political Communication**

*Communication 7/8013*

**Course Description**

What makes communication “political?” Is it something inherent, obvious? Or is something more at stake in that designation? At what levels of analysis, and with which attitudes and expectations, can we define and approach such discourse appropriately across different circumstances? How can we as scholars and teachers draw from the diversity of ways to study politics so as to enhance future work in communication studies? This course looks at such questions by covering recent books in the field that treat communication as “political” from a variety of angles.

Course goals include: gaining familiarity with (some of) the latest scholarship in rhetoric and political communication; becoming versed in the different methodological, political and stylistic choices that inform communication research; making links (and distinctions) across the spectrum of political communication in the U.S.; writing a final paper that can be revised for submission to a journal.

**Intellectual Integrity**

I report instances of cheating to the administration. You must consult the “Office of Student Conduct” statement on academic dishonesty (see below) before our next session. I honor its spirit and adhere to its letter. Study the statement closely. I hold your work to its standards.

<http://libguides.memphis.edu/content.php?pid=453733&sid=3717893>

**Description of Assignments**

* Nine (9) Argument Briefings

A polished and well-written short essay of between 400-600 words that explicates one (1) central passage from the week’s readings and that uses smart questions to generate substantive class discussion.

* Tell us why and how this passage offers insight into a given thinker’s argument. Be sure to cite a specific passage from the text and to **relate** that passage to the text as a whole.
* Finish with two (2) thoughtful discussion questions. Ask us to consider interesting, unresolved, controversial, or unclear aspects of the passage that you think merit further discussion.
* Post your response to the appropriate topic on the eCourseware “Discussions” link by 8am on the day of our course session.
* Bring a hard copy printout of your briefing to the course session.

I will grade each briefing on a scale of one (1) to five (5) points, with “5” reserved for briefings that demonstrate great care and attention to detail.

* One (1) Argument Presentation

A fifteen (15) minute presentation (exactly 15 minutes; time it) which you will deliver either on 11/24 or on 12/1. It should be a polished and compelling version of your final paper. It offers you a chance to make your case at length and to receive feedback on your argument.

* One (1) Final Paper

A 6000-8000 word paper due as a Word attachment to me via email by 10am on 12/7. Your final paper must demonstrate a strong conceptual grasp of some aspect of political communication. It is also a chance for you to do some writing on a particular area close to your research.

See the “SEMPOLCOMM-ASSIGNMENTS” handout for details on each assignment. Any assignment turned in after the due date is ineligible for full credit unless there is some kind of an emergency.

**Grading**

Each assignment has a maximum number of total points (see below). You begin with zero (0). Throughout the term you accumulate points toward your final grade. The grade will be scored on a 100 point scale.

* Argument Briefings/45pts
* Argument Presentation/10pts
* Final Paper/45pts

**Required Texts\***

* *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, Edelman
* *Double-Consciousness and the Rhetoric of Barack Obama,* Terrill
* *Question of Sex: Feminism, Rhetoric, and Differences That Matter,* Poirot
* *Challenges of Ordinary Democracy,* Tracy

\*Any student who consistently fails to bring the readings to class sessions will be urged to drop the course. Obtain all texts ASAP. Do not wait.

**Seminar in Political Communication – Course Schedule**

**8/25** **Introductions**

**9/1 Argument Briefing posted to eCourseware by 8am**

Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language”

Mouffe’s “Politics and Passions”

Connolly’s *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Preface and Introduction)

**9/8 Argument Briefing posted to eCourseware by 8am**

Edelman’s *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chapters 1-3)

**9/15 Argument Briefing posted to eCourseware by 8am**

Edelman’s *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chapters 4-7)

**9/22 Argument Briefing posted to eCourseware by 8am**

Terrill’s *Double-Consciousness and the Rhetoric of Barack Obama* (Chapters 1-3)

**9/29 Argument Briefing posted to eCourseware by 8am**

Terrill’s *Double-Consciousness and the Rhetoric of Barack Obama* (Chapters 4-6, epilogue)

**10/6 Argument Briefing posted to eCourseware by 8am**

Poirot’s *Question of Sex: Feminism, Rhetoric, and Differences That Matter* (Intro, chapters 1-2)

**10/13** FALL BREAK (class will not meet)

**10/20 Argument Briefing posted to eCourseware by 8am**

Poirot’s *A Question of Sex: Feminism, Rhetoric, and Differences That Matter* (Chapters 3-5)

**10/27** (class will not meet; use Doodle link on eCourseware to schedule a meeting to discuss your final paper)

**11/3 Argument Briefing posted to eCourseware by 8am**

Tracy’s *Challenges of Ordinary Democracy: A Case Study in Deliberation and Dissent* (Chapters 1-5)

**11/10 Argument Briefing posted to eCourseware by 8am**

Tracy’s *Challenges of Ordinary Democracy: A Case Study in Deliberation and Dissent* (Chapters 6-9,

epilogue)

**11/17** (class will not meet) National Comm Association Conference <http://www.natcom.org/convention/>

**11/24** **Presentations** (Group A)

**12/1** **Presentations** (Group B)

**12/7** **Final Paper due at 10am as a Word attachment via email**