Carleton University

Political Management

POLM 5014
Political Marketing

Course description:

As Jennifer Lees-Marshment put it:

Political marketing is a fundamental part of political life. A large number of political players, including presidents and prime ministers, politicians and parties, as well as government departments and councils turn to marketing in their pursuit of political goals. Market research is used when deciding on policies and service design, to understand what the people they serve and seek votes from want and need; voter profiling helps create new segments to target; strategy guides the creation of the political brand to develop an attractive vision; internal marketing guides the provision of volunteer involvement; analytics and experimental research test and refine communication messages; and delivery management sets expectations and helps to convey progress once a politician is elected or a programme has begun. Political marketing is complex, broad, and constantly evolving. No longer confined to advertising or campaigns, marketing influences policy development and leadership decisions. In government significant resources are devoted to policy research, marketing, and branding whole nations. Politicians use communication to build long-term relationships with voters rather than just sell their product.

The objective of this course is to equip students who hope to find opportunities in politics or adjacent to it with an understanding of theory and practice of political marketing and its major components and some practice communicating their ideas in writing and verbally.

The secondary objective is to expose students to the broadest possible range of experts and practitioners from across the country, and the world. We are in Ottawa, yes, so naturally there is a focus on federal party politics and government, but this represents only a small fraction of the politics taking place across the country. At the conclusion, it is hoped that students will be sufficiently conversant with political marketing to follow and participate where needed in the deliberations to lead to better decisions.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students are expected to have:

* A knowledge of the scientific literature on political marketing and a knowledge of some of the important intellectual and applied influences

* The ability to assess, balance and contrast the weaknesses and strengths of different positions in classic and contemporary debates in this field.

* An understanding of the research skills necessary to the analysis of the nature and effects of political marketing in Canada.

You will notice that some weeks have more readings, some less, depending on the lecture plan, but that readings notably tail off towards the end term as I expect you to be devoting your time to your projects.

Optional Books (available on amazon.ca)

Students are not required to purchase textbooks or other learning materials for this course.

Jennifer Lees-Marshment et al., **Political Marketing: Principles and Applications**, 3rd edition, 2019. Paperback $61.83 new/$48.00 used.

Alex Marland et al., **Political Marketing in Canada,** 2012. $15.00 used.

Drew Westen, **The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation**, 2007. $28.91 new/$18.88 used.

Jonathan Haidt, **The Righteous Mind**, 2012. $24.00 new

Frank Luntz, **Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear,** 2008**.** $24.92 new/$10.90 used.

Course calendar:

Week 1 - Lecture: Course Introduction and Basic Principles of Political Marketing

Readings:

Jennifer Lees-Marshment et al., **Political Marketing: Principles and Approaches**, 3rd edition, 2019, chapter 1.

Optional:

R. Kocaman & M. Coşgun, (2024). Political Marketing and Voting Behavior: A Systematic Literature Review and Agenda for Future Research. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2024.2374253

J. An, Performance analysis and scientific mapping of the literature on political marketing and brand: a systematic review. *Int Rev Public Nonprofit Mark* **22**, 327–347 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-025-00430-3

Assignment: Write a 500 word reflection paper on what you think political marketing is and how you hope to make use of political marketing in the future. It will be the first entry in your lecture journal which counts towards your mark.

Week 2 – Lecture and Guest Seminar via ZOOM from Vancouver – Brooke Pigott: Voter Segmentation and Targeting

Readings:

M. Scammell (2015). *Consumer Democracy: The Marketing of Politics*, Ch. 3.

Week 3 – Lecture and Guest Seminar in Person – Jeff Ballingall: Social Media and Digital Political Marketing

Readings:

Enli, G. (2017). "Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider: Donald Trump's Campaign Strategy."

Week 4 – Lecture and Guest Seminar in Person – Marcella Munro: Political Branding, Identity and Image – The Case of Vision Vancouver

Readings:

Smith, G., & French, A. (2009). "The Political Brand: A Consumer Perspective."

Week 5 – *Lecture and Guest Seminar (ON ZOOM) – Matt Smith: Data Analytics, Polling and Microtargeting vs Macro-Narrative*

Readings:

Alex Marland et al. eds, **Political Marketing in Canada,** 2012, chapters 4,5 and 6.

Jennifer Lees-Marshment et al., **Political Marketing: Principles and Approaches**, 3rd edition, 2019, chapter 3.

Week 6 – Lecture and Guest Seminar: Marcel Weider: Comparative Political Advertising

Reading:

Guy Lachapelle & Masson, Tristan. (2017). Political Advertising in Canada: Navigating the Waters of Free and Fair Elections.

***Week 7* – Lecture and Guest Seminar: Michael Spitale – The Politics of Independent Expenditure Campaigns**

Alex Marland et al., **Political Marketing in Canada,** 2012, ch 10.

Week 8 – Lecture and Guest Seminar: Blue Knox: Building a Political Marketing Campaign

Week 9 – Final Lecture – Strategy, Tactics and Limitations of Political Marketing in Polarized and Volatile Electorate

Week 10 – Take Home Project Presentations

Week 11 – Final Draft Project Presentations

Week 12 – Final Draft Project Presentations

VI. Evaluation:

FINAL PROJECT (40%)

Each student will choose **one** of the following political marketing campaigns as final project:

- Design a political marketing campaign for yes or no for Alberta independence
- Design a political marketing campaign for yes or no for Quebec independence
- Design a political marketing campaign for a provincial party in an election in 2026
- Design a political marketing campaign for a federal party for an election triggered by a defeat of the spring 2026 budget

- Each STUDENT will submit the equivalent of a 30-minute presentation deck.

The evaluation will be based on:

- **The integration of at least 4 key elements from the course**
- **Feasibility of the campaign**
- **Originality**
- **Depth of Scholarship**
- **Quality and depth of the information provided**
- **Accuracy of the information provided**
- **Quality of the visuals**
- **Clarity of the visuals and of the overall deck**
- **Strength of the argument**
- **Strength of the class presentation**
- **Quality of integration of instructor and class feedback from class presentation**

EXPERTS AND PRACTITIONERS JOURNAL (25%)

We have multiple scheduled lectures with experts and practitioners. The JOURNAL will be a reflection and lessons learned from those sessions. For each, students will address:

A summary of the main points of the sessions

How does it relate (or not) from the associated lecture.

Discuss critically – what have you learned?

Each entry will be about no more 1 single spaced page.

TAKE-HOME PROJECT (35%)

This *Take-Home Project* will focus on lectures and how the content can be applied to specific situations.

The format will be to choose to answer two of six questions.

The answer should have the following components:

First – Position the question/project within the context of political marketing

Which fundamentals from the basics of political marketing can contribute to addressing the issue.

Second – Review the relevant element(s) discussed in class which can help address the issue.

Third – Outline an approach/solution to address the issue.

Format: Submit what would be the equivalent of a 15-minute Powerpoint presentation per question

The evaluation criteria are:

- **Quality and depth of the information provided**

- **Accuracy of the information provided**

- **Quality of the visuals**

- **Clarity of the visuals and of the overall deck**

- **Strength of the argument**

- **Strength of the class presentation**

You cannot turn in anything written by AI as if it is your own work. But feel free to use it for background research or to suggest edits to improve your own writing. But like anything else, you must provide citation – specifically you will submit a document detailing the platform used, the prompt and what steps they took to verify the information.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.