

POLM 5906B
Digital Advocacy in Government Relations

I. Course description: This course is designed to empower advocacy professionals with practical skills to translate their knowledge of government relations and policy communications into impactful digital strategies. Throughout the course, you will explore how to leverage various digital platforms and channels to amplify public policy positions and rally supporters around causes. By delving into audience targeting techniques, you'll learn to identify and engage the stakeholders who truly care or need to know about the issues at hand. The course also covers the use of data and analytics—tools that go beyond traditional GR methods—allowing you to track the impact of your campaigns and gain insights into public reactions in real time. The course provides training on of transferrables skills that will enable you to leverage digital tools in different political contexts, such as during elections, by opposition groups, and in day-to-day advocacy efforts, understanding the unique challenges and opportunities each phase presents. Additionally, the course will address the integration of AI and the ethical considerations that arise when applying these technologies to digital strategies.

II. Learning Outcomes: Students will gain a foundational understanding of digital advocacy tools and tactics that can be used alongside government relations mandates. You will learn how to select the right platform, understand the unique targeting parameters available and how to interpret metrics through the lens of advocacy outcomes, while adhering to a high ethical standard.

III. Course calendar:

Class 1: October 30	Topic:
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	<p>Introduction to digital advocacy & campaigns, integration with government relations</p> <p>Beginning with an understanding of industry terms, how to set objectives, identify audiences, and select the right platforms.</p>
<p>Class 2: November 6</p>	<p>Topic: Deep dive on platforms and how to use them.</p> <p>Break down the different platforms and channels most often used in digital advocacy to understand the organic considerations and paid tools available. This seminar will also include a focus ethics and community guidelines to consider, and the future impact of AI.</p> <p>Preparation Materials:</p> <p>X Ads Manager Fundamentals: https://www.xadsacademy.com/student/path/1120386-ads-manager-fundamentals?sid_i=0</p> <p>LinkedIn Targeting Options: https://www.linkedin.com/help/lms/answer/a424655</p> <p>YouTube Ad Targeting Overview: https://www.semrush.com/blog/youtube-ad-targeting/</p> <p>Facebook (Meta) Ad Targeting in 2024: https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2021/09/13/facebook-ad-targeting-privacy-first-world</p>
<p>Class 3: November 13</p>	<p>Topic: Analytics, metrics and reporting</p> <p>Setting performance indicators and benchmarks, tracking success and understanding impact of paid campaigns and organic content through data.</p> <p>Students will learn how to translate effective digital campaign analytics into insights and recommendations that support communications and government relations strategies.</p>

<p>Class 4: November 20</p>	<p>Topic: Digital activation: Member-based organizations, coalition building and supporter engagement</p> <p>Understand how to make the most of first-party data to enhance digital campaigns through e-mails, website features, organic and owned content planning. As generative AI grows in use and applicable, we will explore new and emerging trends of AI in digital advocacy, and government relations more broadly, to activate and engage with people online.</p>
<p>Class 5: November 27</p>	<p>Topic: Digital storytelling and creative considerations</p> <p>Digital campaigns rely on creative messaging, advertisements or assets that stand out and give people online something to engage with.</p> <p>By understanding different specifications (options and limitations), including the types of styles and ad types that optimize, you will be able to translate your understanding of complex GR/policy issues into more effective digital campaigns.</p>
<p>Class 6: December 4</p>	<p>Topic: Final assignment presentations, digital campaign review, and assessment</p>

IV. Evaluation:

Evaluation will be assignment-based. Students will be asked to complete three assignments, including the final assignment and presentation of a digital campaign. The two interim assignments will be individual assignments introducing students to common strategies that showcase their ability to translate content or analytics into GR and communications recommendations. For final assignments, students will be asked to work in groups of 3-4 to develop a digital campaign strategy. Students will translate a policy ask that requires legislative change or requests funding into a digital strategy aimed at persuading a specific or all political parties ahead of the next federal election, with the end goal of informing platform development or a public announcement by a political leader during the writ period.

Throughout the course, students are encouraged to use ChatGPT, or other Generative AI tools to assist with their assignments or work outside of class. It should be used as a resource only, completing tasks such as synthesizing information or expediting tasks, and not as a tool to write materials. Any content or task that has leveraged generative AI should be transparently noted, by sharing the prompts that they're using to assist with their work as a footnote.

Assignment #1 (15%) Due before 6pm on November 20:

Students will receive a set of metrics from a recent digital advocacy campaign following the class #3 on November 13. Data will include campaign objective, target audience, channels final results including, impressions, cost-per-thousand, clicks, click-through rate, and engagement.

Students will be asked to review data and provide the following:

- General observations of campaign performance and objectives
- Analysis of top performing metrics and identification of low performance
- Recommendation on ideas to optimize the campaign in the future.

This should be summarized in 2-3 pages.

Assignment #2 (10%) Due before 6pm on November 27:

Students will be asked to create a content strategy based on a set of campaign objectives, audiences and desired outcomes provided during class #4 on November 20. The content strategy should include owned/organic and paid tactics/ideas and rationale to support each tactic, connected back to the provided information. While written/draft content/messages/creative is not required, students can provide specific examples of content to illustrate proposed tactics.

This assignment should be no more than 4 pages/slides.

Final Project (35%) Due December 4, presented during class:

The final assignment will be to develop a digital campaign strategy based on a provided scenario that will be provided on November 13th to each group.

Each scenario will include a defined policy objective, background information on the GR strategy, and a profile of the client, association or organization that will be the voice behind the digital campaign.

Students will be asked to develop a strategy in the form of a deck that includes:

- Overview of the challenge and political considerations

- Clear articulation of the campaign objective
- Audience targets (primary and secondary)
- Overarching campaign narrative/tagline
- Owned/organic tactics
- Paid media tactics
- List of key performance indicators

Students will present findings during the final class and answer their colleague’s questions. The time limit for the presentation portion will be 15 minutes, and the Q&A period will be 5 minutes.

Evaluation:

Mark Breakdown	
Participation	40%
Assignments	25%
Final project	35%

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.

While late submissions will be accepted a 1/3 letter grade will be deducted per day.

VII. Statement on Plagiarism

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- **coursework completed for another class;**
- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;

- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course.

VIII. Statement on Student Mental Health

As a University student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you.

[You may include the following list or reference this link (<https://carleton.ca/wellness/>)]
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Emergency Resources (on and off

campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

IX. Requests for Academic Accommodations

[Please include the following text or reference this link (<https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>) on all course outlines, and read it at the beginning of your first few classes to remind students. For details, see

the [accommodations section](#) and the [Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations](#).]

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Academic consideration for medical or other extenuating circumstances:

Students must contact the instructor(s) as soon as possible, and normally no later than 24 hours after the submission deadline for course deliverables. [*Provide any additional information on your requirements for short-term informal accommodations. If you require supporting documentation for short-term considerations, you may only request the [Academic Consideration for Coursework form](#). You may not request medical notes or documentation.*]

Students should also consult the [Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations](#) for more information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found [here](#).

Pregnancy and Family-Status Related Accommodation: Please write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first few weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details about the accommodation policy, visit the Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) website.

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>