



**Carleton
University**

Political Management

POLM 5004 Advanced Strategic Communication

Course description

This course examines the key elements of effective communication within the Canadian political context. Building on concepts from *Strategic Communications (POLM 5018)*, it enables students to deepen their understanding of key issues in the political and media environments, such as public opinion, political marketing, image and reputation, media relations, and crisis management. The course equips students with the skills needed to analyze complex environments, plan and execute effective communications, and anticipate political challenges, providing a strong foundation for successful political communication.

Course Format

In person, on campus.

Learning outcomes

The primary objective of this course is to equip students with the skills to think critically in communication terms, plan strategically in context, and effectively anticipate and manage crises.

By the end of this course, students will:

- Develop the ability to assess the political and media environment and incorporate this understanding into strategy development.
- Analyze, reflect and think critically about the use of strategic communication in and around government, learning to identify successful efforts and provide constructive feedback to improve communication quality.
- Deliver effective presentations. This includes the ability to demonstrate a clear understanding of assigned readings, the ability to summarize information in a clear and organized manner, the ability to present material in a persuasive and engaging manner, and the ability to respond thoughtfully to questions.
- Cultivate professional teamwork skills, including compromise, collaboration, and producing high-quality group work that simulates real-world political communication scenarios.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend every class, complete the assigned readings, and pay attention to the daily political news (specifically in Canada at the federal level).

In the first half of the term, most classes will consist of lectures followed by a discussion period. Some classes will also feature guest speakers, and students are highly encouraged to actively participate in these discussions. Engagement with guest speakers is an important part of the course and will be considered in the overall evaluation of attendance and participation.

The second half of the term will be mainly dedicated to student presentations and peer-led discussions.

Course Readings

All course readings are accessible through library reserves (ARES) and will be posted on Brightspace in each module (one module per week).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is strictly forbidden and may result in a zero grade for an assignment. See Appendix for more details on forms of plagiarism and procedures in cases of suspected violations.

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to produce assessed content (e.g., text, code, equations, image, summary, video, etc.) is not permitted in this course and is considered a violation of academic integrity standards (see Appendix).

Evaluation at a glance

Student grades will be comprised of the following components:

EVALUATIONS	%	Date	Where
Participation	15 %	From January 6 to April 7	In class
Assignment #1 – News article evaluation (individual)	20 %	February 2 11:59 PM	On Brightspace
Assignment #2 – Poll analysis (individual)	20 %	February 23, 11:59 PM	On Brightspace
Group student lead seminars	20 %	Week 9-10-11-12	On Brightspace (handout) In class (oral presentation and discussion)
Group cabinet simulation	25 %	Week 13-14	On Brightspace (handout) In class (simulation and discussion)

Evaluation in detail

Participation (individual) (15%)

Students are required to complete the assigned readings, watch/listen to all assigned pre-recorded content and attend all class sessions. Class participation is essential for success in this course. While readings and recorded content are available, nothing can replace being present in class. Each absence results in a loss of participation points for that session. Active participation in class discussions is expected. Political staffers, and those working closely with them, are expected to be well-informed and able to present facts and opinions on a wide range of issues. You are encouraged to express and defend your ideas thoughtfully and diplomatically. Your contributions should be constructive and demonstrate that you have prepared and considered your input. Active engagement during guest speaker visits is equally important and will count towards your participation grade, as these professionals provide valuable insights into the world of political management.

Assignment #1 – News article evaluation (individual) (20%)

The second assignment is individual and consists of evaluating a news article. The assignment will be two pages long, 1.5 line spacing. Full details and expectations regarding this assignment will be discussed in class and posted on Brightspace at the beginning of the term.

Assignment #2 – Poll analysis (individual) (20%)

The first assignment is individual and consists of analysing a survey. The assignment will be two pages long, 1.5 line spacing. Full details and expectations regarding this assignment will be discussed in class and posted on Brightspace at the beginning of the term.

Student-led seminars (20%)

Starting in Week 9 (March 3) and running for four consecutive classes until Week 12 (March 24), students will conduct a seminar based on an assigned book. The books are listed in the Course Schedule table below.

These seminars will be prepared and presented by groups of two to four students (final group sizes depend on enrollment).

Group selection and presentation sign-up:

- Self-select your group and sign up for your preferred presentation week by our third class (January 20).
- Presentation dates will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, starting in Week 2.

Assignment components:

This assignment includes two parts:

- *Seminar handout (10%)*
Each group will write a brief summary (maximum three pages, single-spaced) of the assigned book, including at least four discussion questions.
- *Group presentation (10%)*
Each group will deliver a presentation that delves into the ideas and questions raised in the assigned book and handout, followed by a period for questions and class discussion.

Full details and expectations regarding this assignment will be discussed in class and posted on Brightspace at the beginning of the term.

Group cabinet simulation (25%)

In Weeks 13 and 14, a cabinet simulation exercise will be conducted, involving the same groups of two to four students as in the student-led seminars.

This simulation is designed to immerse you in the role of government. Each group will assume the position of Chief of Staff for a minister.

Each group will deliver a 45-minute presentation, acting as the Chief of Staff leading a cabinet meeting. The presentation should outline a political marketing strategy to advise the minister on his approach for the final year of the mandate. Following the presentation, the remaining class members, acting as cabinet colleagues, will engage in a 20-25 minutes Q&A session.

This exercise is intended to replicate the dynamics of a minister's cabinet, requiring you to prepare strategic recommendations and respond to questions and differing perspectives from colleagues who may challenge your proposed approach.

Full details and expectations for this assignment will be reviewed in class and posted on Brightspace at the beginning of the term.