

COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

Academic School/Department:	Communications and The Arts
Programme:	Communications: Media Studies International Relations Political Science
FHEQ Level:	5
Course Title:	Political Communications
Course Code:	COM 5215
Total Hours:	120
Timetabled Hours:	45
Guided Learning Hours:	0
Independent Learning Hours:	75
Credits:	12 UK CATS credits 6 ECTS credits 3 US credits

Course Description:

The course focuses on the role of political communications in the political process. It examines the relationship between governments, the media, and the public in Western democracies, with emphasis on the UK and the US political systems. Starting with an overview of the role of the media in political theory, it moves to the examination of the origins and development of political marketing and public relations, the use of political advertising by political parties, and the representation of non-governmental actors in the media coverage. Furthermore, the course considers issues of national security and secrecy as well as changes in political communications brought about by the introduction of new technologies. Particular attention is given to the use of techniques and strategies during election campaigns.

Prerequisites:

GEP 4180 Research and Writing 2

Aims and Objectives:

The course aims to develop a clear theoretical framework for accessing contemporary democratic processes and the role of mass communication channels. It examines the nature of public opinion as well as the tools and methods employed by governments in their attempts to influence the media and shape public opinion. Furthermore, the course analyses the legal, organizational and political restraints that shape the operation of media's political coverage. Finally, the course explores at length the impact of the media on the conduct of political campaigns.

Programme Outcomes:

Communications: Media Studies: A5(i), B5(ii), C5(ii), D5(i), D5(ii)

International Relations: Aii, Bii, Cii, Di, Dii

Political Science: Aii, Bii, Cii, Di, Dii

A detailed list of the programme outcomes is found in the Programme Specification. This is maintained by Registry and located at:

<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

Learning Outcomes:

- Development of a detailed understanding of media's role in political processes, and the ways in which different political groups and actors seek to influence the media, public opinion and voting behavior.
- Development of a detailed understanding of the ways in which forms of political communication are embedded in everyday life, and serve as ways of claiming and understanding identities
- Students should deliver work with limited supervision to a given length, format, brief and deadline, properly referencing sources and ideas and making use, as appropriate, of a problem-solving approach
- Students are expected to demonstrate in their work the ability to work within groups and alone with limited direction or supervision, to engage in self-reflection, use feedback to analyse own capabilities, appraise alternatives, and plan and implement actions

Indicative Content:

- Introduction and Key Terms of Political Communications
- Politics in the Age of Mediation
- Mass Communications and Political Theory
- Spin Doctors, Political Marketing, Public Relations and the media
- Election campaigns, new media and democracy
- The role of public affairs and lobbying
- History, definitions and theories of propaganda
- Role of non-governmental political actors in influencing the political process
- Political Advertising
- International Political Communications

Assessment:

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

Teaching Methodology:

The course combines lectures with interactive discussion and co-operative assessment. The former introduces the main arguments related to debate about political communications. The latter are encouraged through individual seminar presentations aiming to link the theoretical arguments with an analysis of examples of contemporary political communication. All students are expected to be fully prepared to participate in informal discussions related to the topic at the end of the presentations. Additional screenings, guest speakers and group exercises may be used to initiate further discussion.

Your work on this course will be assessed in a variety of ways. We shall use both formative and summative approaches. With formative approaches you will receive feedback which does not contribute to the calculation of your final grade. This feedback is intended to help you improve your overall approach to your learning and enable you to achieve better results. With summative approaches the feedback you receive will be woven into the process that makes up your final grade.

Indicative Texts:

McNair, B. (2018 Sixth Edition), *An Introduction to Political Communications*, Routledge.
_Morris & Goldsworthy (2008), *PR – A Persuasive Industry?* Palgrave Macmillan

Web Sites:

www.prwatch.org
www.spinwatch.org
www.sigwatch.com
www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk
www.drudgereport.com
www.order-order.com
<http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/index.html>
UK Government portal <http://www.direct.gov.uk>

Please Note: The core and the reference texts will be reviewed at the time of designing the semester syllabus

Change Log for this CSD:

Nature of Change	Date Approved & Approval Body (School or LTPC)	Change Actioned by Academic Registry
Various updates as part of the UG programme review	AB Jan 2022	
Revision – annual update	May 2023	

Total Hours Updated	April 2024	
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