

**Tufts University Department of Urban & Environmental Policy and Planning**

**UEP 294-02: Communications and Media for Policy and Planning  
Spring 2019**

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Brown House 97 Talbot Ave Classroom

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:30 and by appointment

**Description**

This 1-SHU module introduces communications and media theory and tools for policy and planning practitioners. Readings will cover various theories of communication and media and their roles in public policy and planning and formation of ideologies. Tools that will be introduced include strategic communications planning, narrative power analysis, messaging and framing, media relations, and social media strategy. Students will analyze current news and communications strategies of policy and planning practitioners. Students will have ample opportunities in class to practice and role play communications and media strategies (such as mock media interviews and writing press releases).

**Course Objectives**

- 1) Understand how mass media influences policy and planning and communications as a form of power.
- 2) Critically analyze media and communications in shaping public policy and planning discourse and politics.
- 3) Develop skills in planning communications strategies and developing and framing messages.
- 4) Gain experience in using communications and media relations tools and producing communications content on an issue of interest.

**Schedule at a Glance**

Jan 18 9:00-1:00	<b>Communications as Power and Theories of Media</b> <i>Due: Critical Media Analysis]</i>
Feb 8 9:30-4:30	<b>Communications Strategy and Media Techniques</b> <i>Due: Strategic Communications Plan, Letter to the Editor.</i> <i>In class: Press Release, Mock Video Interview</i>
Mar 1 9:00-1:00	<b>Digital Communications and Social Media</b> <i>Due: Op-Ed.</i> <i>In class: Social Media Plan</i>

## Course Requirements and Assessment

### **1. Class Preparation and Participation (20%)**

All students are expected to read and review the required materials before class and to participate fully in class discussions and exercises. There are only 3 sessions and there will be many hands-on exercises during class (assessed as part of the portfolio – see below), so it is very important to be physically and mentally present. Any major in-class exercises missed will need to be done outside of class. Assessment of participation will include presence/absence (15%) and contributing to in-class discussions (5%).

### **2. Blog Portfolio (80%)**

Each student will develop a portfolio on a blog site over the course of the module with analysis and content relating to a current public policy or planning issue that the student is interested in and has a strong opinion on. Topic will be approved by instructor at the first class. Depending on the topic and timeliness, students may also be asked to post elements of their portfolio to UEP's social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, UEP blog, ...).

<b>Week</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>%</b>
1	<u>Critical analysis of media sources and stories</u> Identify at least 3 varied media sources for your topic, including at least one mainstream corporate news source (ABC, CNN, FOX, etc.) and one independent source (blogs, think tank and advocacy group sites). Strive for a varied range of political views. For each source, review and analyze their coverage of your issue. In a blog post, include links to each of your sources and their specific stories and 2-3 paragraphs describing and critically analyzing their reporting. What are the main viewpoints represented (or not)? Who are their sources of information? What are the assumptions embedded in the stories? Who is their intended audience? Finally, conclude with 2-3 paragraphs comparing your sources and what you think their relative influence is on your issue.	10%
2	<u>Strategic Communications Plan</u> Following the SPIN Project's planning template, draft your own communications plan for your topic. For this assignment, you need to have your own point of view and take on a stakeholder role. You can play yourself, as a graduate student in UEP, or take on the role as a staffer of a particular organization or agency.	15%
2	<u>Letter to Editor</u> Choose one media article to respond to and draft a letter to the editor (200 words maximum). You may submit your letter to an actual media publication.	10%
2 in-class	<u>Press Release</u> Draft a mock press release to the media on something noteworthy related to your topic. 1-page maximum.	10%

2 in-class	<u>Mock Video Interview</u> You will be interviewed on video camera for 3-4 minutes, based on your press release. If time allows, students will be interviewed a second time.	5%
3	<u>Op-Ed</u> Write an op-ed on your topic for a newspaper. Do not exceed 700 words. Optional: if your topic is current, you may submit to actual publication and/or the UEP Practical Visionaries blog.	20%
3 in-class	<u>Social Media Plan</u> Plan for using social media (Facebook, Twitter, ...) to achieve your communications goals. If appropriate, include ways to use UEP's social media channels.	10%

### Schedule

#### **Class 1: Jan 18 Communications as Power and Theories of Media**

Course overview.

Communications as Power. In-class mock media debate over Walmart in Boston. Discuss role and power of media in policy and planning. How is communications a form of power in shaping public discourse and ideologies? How has communications evolved in the age of digital media? Students choose a current policy/planning issue for which they have a strong point of view.

Theories of Media. Political-economic, cultural, and social production theories of mass media. How media is involved in producing dominant discourses and marginalizing others. How media is changing in social media era. In-class letter to editor.

*Due: Critical Media Analysis*

#### Readings & Resources (~86 pgs)

Reinsborough, Patrick and Doyle Canning. 2010. *Reimagining Change*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

- Chapter 2: Narrative Power Analysis. (17-40)

Download entire book here: <https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/the-book/>

Castells, Manuel. 2007. "Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society." *International Journal of Communication* 1:238-266.

Ryan, Charlotte. 1991. "Chapter 1: Understanding the Role of the Media." *Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizing*. Boston, MA: South End Press. Pp. 3-30.

Themba-Nixon, Makani. 2006. *Talking the Walk: A Communications Guide for Racial Justice*, edited by Hunter Cutting and Makani Themba-Nixon. Oakland, CA: AK Press.

- Race, Racism and Media: Field Notes from the Frontlines (5-13).

Download toolkit here: <http://www.interrupt.org/pdfs/talkthewalkfinaltools.pdf>

Pew Research Center. March 2018. Social Media Use in 2018. ~10 pgs.

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/>

Napoli, Philip. 2016. "Understanding Our New Communications Economy: Implications for Contemporary Journalism," in Mark Lloyd and Lewis A. Friedland (eds) *The Communication Crisis in America, and How to Fix it*. Palgrave MacMillan. Pp. 17-30.

## **Class 2: Feb 8 Communications Strategy and Media Techniques**

Strategic approaches to communications. Identifying audiences, messages, and media. How to frame messages. In-class exercise on message development and pitching stories.

How to work with mass media. In-class press release and videotaped mock interviews.

*Due: Strategic Communications Plan, Letter to the Editor*

*In-class: Press Release, Mock Video Interview*

Readings & Resources (~100 pgs)

White, Isobel (ed.). 2008. *Whose Media? Our Media! Strategic Communication Tools to Reform, Reclaim, and Revolutionize the Media*. San Francisco, CA: SPIN Project.

- Section 1: "Preparing for Change" (3-13)
- Section 2: "Shaping the Story" (15-24)

Reinsborough, Patrick and Doyle Canning. 2010. *Reimagining Change*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

- Chapter 3: Winning the Battle of the Story. (43-65)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/opinion/23READ.html> - tips on letter to editor from NYT

Wilson, Ernest J., Sasha Costanza-Chock, and Michelle C. Forelle. 2016. "A Provocation on Behalf of the Excluded," in Mark Lloyd and Lewis A. Friedland (eds) *The Communication Crisis in America, and How to Fix it*. Palgrave MacMillan. Pp. 249-266

Ryan, Charlotte, Michael Anastario, and Karen Jeffreys. 2005. Start Small, Build Big: Negotiating Opportunities in Media Markets. *Mobilization: An International Journal* 10(1): 111-128.

White, Isobel (ed.). 2008. *Whose Media? Our Media! Strategic Communication Tools to Reform, Reclaim, and Revolutionize the Media*. San Francisco, CA: SPIN Project.

- Section 3: "Moving Your Message" (29-43)

Themba-Nixon, Makani. 2006. *Talking the Walk: A Communications Guide for Racial Justice*, edited by Hunter Cutting and Makani Themba-Nixon. Oakland, CA: AK Press.

- Tools Sections 2-4 (143-181). [SCAN]

## **Class 3: March 1 Digital Communications and Social Media**

Decentralized and more democratic communications strategies through digital communications and social media.

*Due: Op-Ed.*

*In class: Social Media Plan*

Readings & Resources (48 pgs)

Costanza-Chock, Sasha. 2011. Digital popular communication: Lessons on information and communication technologies for social change from the immigrant rights movement. *National Civic Review*, 100(3): 29-35.

White, Isobel (ed.). 2008. *Whose Media? Our Media! Strategic Communication Tools to Reform, Reclaim, and Revolutionize the Media*. San Francisco, CA: SPIN Project.

- Section 4: “Plugging People In” (45-55)

Phillip Clampitt. 2018. *Social Media Strategy: Tools for Professional and Organizations*. Sage.

- Ch 7: Channels (73-81)
- Table 13.2 Platform-Specific Metrics and Tools (182-183)
- Appendix 1: Social Media Platform Fact Sheets (219-229)

Eric Gordon and Paul Mihailidis, editors. 2016. *Civic Media: Technology, Design, Practice*. MIT Press.

- 5. Case Study: “Bury until They Change Their Ways” – The Digg Patriots and/as User Generated Censorship, by Chris Peterson (125-130)
- 20. Case Study: The “It Gets Better Project”, by Laurie Phillips Honda (333-340)

### **Students with Disabilities**

Tufts University values the diversity of our students, staff, and faculty; recognizing the important contribution each student makes to our unique community. Students with disabilities are assured that the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office will work with each student individually to create access to all aspects of student life. Tufts is committed to providing equal access and support to all qualified students through the provision of reasonable accommodations so that each student may fully participate in the Tufts experience. If you have a disability that requires reasonable accommodations, please contact the Student Accessibility Services office at [Accessibility@tufts.edu](mailto:Accessibility@tufts.edu) or 617-627-4539 to make an appointment with an SAS representative to determine appropriate accommodations. Please be aware that accommodations cannot be enacted retroactively, making timeliness a critical aspect for their provision.

### **Academic Integrity**

Tufts holds its students strictly accountable for adherence to academic integrity. The consequences for violations can be severe. It is critical that you understand the requirements of ethical behavior and academic work as described in Tufts’ Academic Integrity handbook. If you ever have a question about the expectations concerning a particular assignment or project in this course, be sure to ask me for clarification. The Faculty of the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering are required to report suspected cases of academic integrity violations to the Dean of Student Affairs Office. If I suspect that you have cheated or plagiarized in this class, I must report the situation to the dean.