

Georgetown University, Master of Professional Studies

Mobilizing the Masses: Grassroots Communications

MPPR 780, Spring 2014, 8:00 pm – 10:30 pm Wednesday
Professor Joseph LaMountain
Office Hours: By appointment

1. Course Description

The average consumer is bombarded with thousands of messages every single day. Grassroots and word-of-mouth communications can cut through the clutter, make your message stick, and persuade people to act. Grassroots is the oldest form of communications and the most effective. But many marketing and communications professionals overlook important, yet inexpensive, grassroots communications tactics. We'll discuss the history of grassroots, the theories behind it all, and develop "how-to" tactics that can help any company, cause or candidate succeed.

2. Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this class, students can expect to:

- Understand the history and theory of grassroots communications
- Identify what makes grassroots communications effective
- Develop grassroots communications objectives, strategies and tactics
- Evaluate the effectiveness of grassroots campaigns
- Envision possible futures for grassroots communications

3. Required Books

In addition to the books listed below, additional readings may be assigned through the course of the semester (detailed in the course schedule). Please note that many of these books can be purchased for much less than the listed price through amazon.com and abebooks.com:

- Alinsky, S. *Rules for Radicals*. Random House, New York, 1971, ISBN 0679721134, \$14.
- Alter, Jonathan., *The Center Holds: Obama and His Enemies*. Simon and Schuster, New York, 2013, ISBN 1451646070, \$17.
- Blodgett, J. and Lofy, B., *Winning Your Election the Wellstone Way*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008, ISBN 081665333X, \$22.95.
- Cialdini, R., *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Collins Business, New York, 2007, ISBN 006124189X, \$17.99.
- Gladwell, M., *The Tipping Point*, Little, Brown and Company, New York, 2002, ISBN 0316346624, \$15.99.
- Luntz, F., *Words that Work*, Hyperion, New York, 2007, ISBN 1401309291, \$15.99.

4. Course Schedule

January	
Week 1: Jan. 15	<p>What is this Course All About?</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> We will review the syllabus and class policies and discuss what we mean by grassroots communications. We will also examine elements of the 2008 Obama presidential campaign and discuss the grassroots strategies of the 2012 Presidential election. We will also take time to share our backgrounds, interests and what we expect to learn from taking this course.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Center Holds.</i>, pages TBA • “Yes We Can”, Daily Beast/Newsweek - http://tinyurl.com/7fmtbkg
Week 2: Jan. 22	<p>History and Origins of Grassroots Communications</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> We will examine examples of grassroots communications throughout history, both political, electoral and from the business community. We will discuss what they have in common, and what differentiates the good from the bad, and how technology has impacted our ability to communicate with one another.</p>
Week 3: Jan. 29	<p>Current Thinking in Grassroots Communications</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> How do ideas and information spread? What is the basic reason for grassroots communications? Are new technologies enhancing, or hindering, our ability to communicate? Why and how are businesses starting to use it?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Tipping Point</i>, pages 3-169 (and skim remaining chapters).
February	
Week 4: Feb. 5 DUE: Reaction Paper #1	<p>The Holy Grail: Objectives, Strategies and Tactics</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> What are the definitions and differences between objectives, strategy and tactics? Why are they critical to the success of your grassroots communications plan? How can you align your goals, strategies and tactics?</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Center Holds.</i>, pages TBA • “Dr. King's Teachings on Strategy and Tactics,” Paul Rockwell - http://tinyurl.com/26xvckj.
Week 5: Feb. 12	<p>Why Political Campaigns Matter</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> Politicians, through political campaigns, have mastered the art of effective grassroots communication. We’ll discuss how to organize and execute a successful campaign for elective office and what interest groups and industry can learn from them.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Winning your Election the Wellstone Way</i>, pages 21-116
Week 6: Feb. 19	<p>Interest Groups and Businesses</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> How are nonprofit interest groups using grassroots to achieve their objectives? Is there a role for grassroots in activities other than political advocacy? Fundraising? How are businesses using grassroots communications</p>

	to achieve their objectives?
Week 7: Feb. 26 DUE: Reaction Paper #2	Targeting and Getting Sticky Before developing and implementing a grassroots campaign, you have to identify whom you want to speak with and what will most likely motivate them to act and spread the word to others. <u>Readings:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Made to Stick</i>, pages 1-24 and 195-199 (to be provided electronically).
March	
Week 8: Mar. 5	Developing a Winning Message Platform <u>Discussion:</u> Words have the power to motivate and inspire. When developing a message platform, you need to consider carefully the power of the words. What are you trying to say? Who are you trying to reach and influence? How can you create a concise, clear message while retaining maximum flexibility? What about proof points? <u>Readings:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Words that Work</i>, pages ix-70 and 127-178.
Mar. 12	No class
Week 9: Mar. 15	Putting Theory into Practice (aka Field Trip) Grassroots communications is about face-to-face communications. In this meeting we will get out of the classroom and implement into the community grassroots communications tactics we develop. <u>Note:</u> This class takes place on a Saturday from 9:00am – 11:30am. There will be no class meeting on March 19 due to this session.
Week 10: Mar. 26	Become a Communications Czar <u>Discussion:</u> The most essential element of a successful grassroots campaign is the ability to communicate well. We will discuss the relative value of various forms of communication, developing an effective communications plan, tactics for securing media coverage and word of mouth “buzz.” <u>Readings:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rules for Radicals</i>, pages 81-97
April	
Week 11: Apr. 2 DUE: Team Project & Presentations	Interactive Communications: Promise and Peril <u>Discussion:</u> Email and social media make it easy to reach your audience. But does that mean they are listening? We will discuss how to effectively use interactive technologies and the continued importance of old school, and often overlooked, communications tools like the mail and telephone. <u>Readings:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oshinsky, D., <i>Polio: An American Story</i> (excerpt to be provided).
Week 12: Apr. 5	Field Exercise: Implementation of Research Projects <u>Discussion:</u> We will meet a predetermined location to implement our research projects. During this time, we will interact directly with members of the public through face-to-face conversations and/or phone calls. We will test our theories and report and discuss our findings <u>Note:</u> This class takes place on a Saturday from 9:00 am - 11:30 am. There will be no class meeting on April 16 due to this meeting.

Week 13: Apr. 9	<p>Creating and Implementing Tactics</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> You have an objective and a strategy. How do you get people to respond and take the desired action? We will examine ways to motivate people to take action, successful tactics for engaging customers, advocates and voters, and the use of incentives.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rules for Radicals</i>, pages 126-148 • <i>Influence</i>, pages 1-56 (and skim 57-280)
April 16	No class
Week 14 Apr. 23	<p>Measurement and Evaluation</p> <p><u>Discussion:</u> It takes times and money to create, launch and implement a grassroots campaign. How will you know if it's working? We'll discuss a number of different mechanisms that can determine if your efforts are on track for achieving short, medium and long-term goals.</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Word of Mouth Marketing</i>, pages 183-193 (to be provided electronically)
Apr. 30	No class
May	
Week 15 May. 7	<p>Grassroots Film Festival</p> <p><i>Can Mr. Smith get to Washington Anymore?</i> - Frank Popper's engaging documentary follows the 2004 campaign of Jeff Smith, a young political science instructor at Washington University who runs for the seat vacated by retiring congressman Dick Gephardt. Pitted against state Rep. Russ Carnahan, the scion of a powerful political family, Smith proves that an unknown with no money can make a difference, forging a campaign that ultimately poses a serious challenge to Carnahan.</p>
No Class May. 12	Grades Due to Georgetown

5. Assignments

I. Class Participation (25 points)

Students are expected to complete the weekly readings and participate in our weekly meetings. This is not a "lecture" class, but one that relies on your participation. Participants will receive a grade based on the "quantity" of your involvement and the "quality" of your comments and remarks.

II. Reaction Paper #1 (50 points)

The Reaction Paper #1 is due week 4. It should be 2-3 pages and examine the grassroots communications elements of a current event. For example, you might want to examine the role of grassroots communications in the runaway success of a new product. Your assignment is not to restate the event, but to analyze the situation, discuss the role of grassroots communications (or lack thereof) and provide arguments based on what you have learned in class.

III. Reaction Paper #2 (50 points)

The Reaction Paper #2 is due week 7. It should be a one-page summary of the objective, strategies and tactics for a current grassroots communications campaign. For example, you might want to break down the way in which Apple is using word-of-mouth marketing to sell its products. Or you

could examine the ways in which Greenpeace is using grassroots communications to address climate change. Please also include a brief paragraph or two of analysis (e.g. “Is it working?”)

IV. Team Project (75 points)

We will develop a tactic that can be implemented by the members of the class. For example, we may decide to distribute postcards or collect signatures on a petition in a public location. Each team will theorize on the best way(s) to maximize compliance with the stated request (e.g. take a postcard). On April 2, groups will present their theories. On April 5, (Saturday) the class will meet and each group will execute its plan. Finally, on April 23, each group will present their findings to the class.

The research plan paper should be 2-3 pages in length, state what you are attempting to learn and its relevance to grassroots communications, how you will measure success and what your actual results were after our field work. Each presentation should be 10-15 minutes in duration. The written paper will account for 2/3 of the team’s grade while the group presentation and experiment will account for 1/3 of the team’s grade.

V. Individual Proposal (100 points)

The Individual Proposal is a 5- to 7-page proposal addressed to a candidate, organization or company. The proposal will analyze an issue currently affecting the target organization and offer a comprehensive solution along with suggested strategies and tactics. The Individual Proposal is due by week 14.

6. Grading

Assignment	Due	Points
Class Participation	Weekly	25
Reaction paper #1	Week 4	50
Reaction Paper #2	Week 7	50
Group Project	Week 14	75
Individual Proposal	Week 15	100
Total		300

7. Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. If circumstances preclude you from attending a class or arriving on time, please notify me prior to the start of class by text, cell or email.

Missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). Absences for classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade. If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

8. Class Policies

- I try not to be doctrinaire about the use of electronic devices in class, especially laptops, because many students use them to take notes. If you need to check email, or Facebook or IM with friends, please wait until the break.
- Readings in any given week correspond to the discussion taking place that week. In other words, be prepared to discuss the readings listed for in the syllabus for that week’s class.
- Assignments must be submitted on paper and electronically to jlamountain@reingold.com.
- Late work will be dropped one grade for each day it is late. If you have extenuating circumstances speak with me before the due date. Work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date.

- I will not offer incomplete grades save in the most exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances. Job requirements do not qualify.
- Grammar, spelling and proper citations matter. Your ideas matter more.
- You are responsible for classroom information. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with your classmates to get class notes.

9. Georgetown University Honor Pledge

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

10. Academic Resource Center

If you believe you have a disability, please contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow their office time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

11. Georgetown University Writing Center: Please contact the Writing Center for support in preparing your written assignments. The Writing Center staff can be reached in Lauinger Library, 217A or at 202-687-4246 or <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>.

12. Grading Scale

The Georgetown University grading scale, in a 300-point format, is as follows:

- A 279-300
- A- 270-279.9
- B+ 264-269.9
- B 249-263.9
- B- 240-248.9
- C 210-239.9
- F 209.9 and below