Tufts University Department of Urban & Environmental Policy and Planning

UEP 294-02: Communications and Media for Policy and Planning
Spring 2016

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Fridays: 9-11:30 @ 72 Professors Row Classroom
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:30 and by appointment

Description
This 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. 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, writing op-eds from differing perspectives, story boarding, and creating a video).

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.

Course Requirements and Assessment

1. Class Preparation and Participation (50%)
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 7 sessions and there will be many hands-on exercises during class, so it is very important to be physically and mentally present.

2. Blog Portfolio (50%)
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 can a position on. Topic should be approved by instructor after the first class. Instructor feedback will be provided within a week of each portfolio assignment.

The components include:

- Critical analysis of media sources and stories (due Week 2, 1/29)
  Identify at least 3 varied media sources for your topic, including at least one mainstream
corporate news sources (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.

• Letter to Editor (in class Week 2, 1/29)
  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.

• Strategic Communications Plan (due Week 3, 2/12)
  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.

• Op-Ed (due Week 4, 2/19)
  Write an op-ed regarding your topic for a newspaper. Do not exceed 700 words.

• Press Release (in class Week 4, 2/19)
  Draft a press release to the media on something noteworthy related to your topic. 1-page maximum.

• Collection of Images (due Week 5, 2/26)
  Compile 5-10 images that you can use in your video blog.

• Social Media plan (due Week 5, 2/26)
  Plan for using social media (Facebook, Twitter, ...) to achieve your communications goals.

• Storyboard (due Week 6, 3/4)
  A story board is a script for your video blog.

• Video – 1-2 minutes (due Week 7, 3/11)
  Your video should be designed to persuade decision makers and stakeholders in your policy topic. It can include still images, video clips, and voiceover, as well as your talking head.

**Schedule (Jan 22 – March 11)**

**Week 1: Jan 22 Communications as Power**

Course overview. 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 pick a current policy/planning issue for which they have a point of view.

**Readings & Resources**

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

**Week 2: Jan 29 Theories of Media**

Political-economic, cultural, and social production theories of mass media. How media is involved in producing dominant discourses and marginalizing others. In-class critical analysis of media sources and stories and draft letter to editor.

*Due: Critical Media Analysis*

**Readings & Resources**


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

**Feb 5 No Class**

**Week 3: Feb 12 Communications Strategy**

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

*Due: Strategic Communications Plan*

**Readings & Resources**

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

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

**Week 4: Feb 19 Media Techniques**

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

*Due: Op-Ed*

**Readings & Resources**


- Section 3: “Moving Your Message” (29-43)
Week 5: Feb 26 Digital Communications and Social Media

Decentralized and more democratic communications strategies through digital communications and social media. In-class exercise on storyboarding for video blog (with Digital Design Center staff).

Due: Image Collection

Readings & Resources


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

At least one video and one social media posting related to your topic.

Week 6: March 4 Digital Media Production

In-class time to work on video. Location to be announced.

Due: Storyboard

Readings & Resources

To be determined.

Week 7: March 11 Portfolio Presentations and Critique

Student presentations of portfolio (video) and critiques.

Due: Video