

“All I Need is One Mic!”

Political Advocacy and Public Opinion in a Digital Age

Instructor: Dr. Menna Demessie

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Room: TBD

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Office Hours: TBD

Mondays 1:00pm – 2:00pm
& by appointment

*** This course provides students with an exclusive opportunity for publication and student presentation to policy panel of experts***

Course Description:

This course is for the bold and the brave, for the student who wants to examine effective communication methods that influence public opinion and public policy in today’s political environment and experientially test those methods. Students will leave this class smarter on how Congress works in a digital age and on theories of political representation, advocacy, legislative behavior, and the American voter. Additionally, students will learn strategies and tips from guest speakers and experts on Capitol Hill as well as those attempting to influence Capitol Hill; the applied component of the course will inevitably build public speaking and leadership skills aimed at influencing public policy.

Course Objectives

1. To broaden and deepen students understanding of public policy and political representation vis-à-vis the political environment and the ways in advances in technology and social media have transformed the political landscape.
2. To develop the theoretical, analytical, and methodological skills to help students think critically and strategically about communications, media framing, technology and its influence on public opinion and political advocacy from both elected officials and the citizenry.
3. To engage and apply the theories and analytical skills to real world policy problems and solutions through experiential learning. In addition to perfecting the art of analytical writing and translating research and data into compelling policy recommendations, students will also be trained on public speaking and leadership skills and be exposed to public speaking opportunities throughout the semester. Furthermore, students will be

provided with opportunities to engage with guest speakers on Capitol Hill and in the advocacy and lobbying world to maximize their internship and educational experience. Finally, the publication opportunity with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation will offer the opportunity to analyze or collect quantitative or qualitative data to be shared and disseminated to the broader communities of interest across the country.

Course Instructor Bio

Dr. Menna Demessie is the Vice President of Policy Analysis and Research at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation CBCF's research and programmatic initiatives in the areas of education, environmental sustainability, criminal justice, economic opportunity, voting, and beyond as it affects African Americans and the global black community. In her capacity, Dr. Demessie has spearheaded several partnerships with the White House, Congress, Annie E. Casey Foundation, and other nonprofit stakeholders to advance strategic efforts to influence and inform public policy. After receiving her joint PhD in political science and public policy from the University of Michigan, she went onto to work for Representative Barbara Lee working on federal unemployment legislation, antipoverty initiatives, and foreign affairs.

Dr. Demessie conducted the first and only empirical and qualitative study of African congressional caucuses in the U.S. House of Representatives for her dissertation and received the highly competitive Congressional Research Award from the Dirksen Congressional Center for her research. Her areas of specialty include American government and legislative behavior, public opinion, International Relations, and Race and Ethnic Politics. She is a passionate scholar who was one of only five political scientists chosen in 2011 for the prestigious American Political Science Association Congressional Fellowship.

In 2016, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser awarded her with the Community Advocacy Award for her successful efforts mobilizing DC's Ethiopian and African community to lobby the DC City Council as well as in her capacity as National Youth Director for the Society of Ethiopians Established in the Diaspora (SEED) where she has served since 2000. She also spearheaded a major diaspora initiative that resulted in SEED being selected by USAID for a diaspora partnership under former Secretary Hillary Clinton's Global Diaspora Initiative.

She has spoken on NPR and other media outlets, presented to several members of Congress on various policy issues, and performs spoken word. She is the founder and managing co-editor of what will be the first ever policy journal launched by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation in 2018. Additionally, she has published on the critical importance of mobilization and representation of black ethnic groups and the need for the U.S. government to recognize the value of working in partnership with Diaspora communities in addressing domestic and international policy.

Grading Standards and Measurement

Individual assignments in this course will be worth various points but converted to a 100 point scale such that an A=100-93%, A-=92-90%, B+=89-87, B=86-83, B-=82-80, etc. You should understand that only excellent work will earn an A. If the work is good, it will earn a B, and satisfactory work will earn a C. You will earn Ds and Fs if your work is less than satisfactory or of poor quality. If you fail to complete the work, you will earn a 0 for the assignment. Incompletes will be allowed only under the most exceptional circumstances.

Final course grades will be proportioned as follows:

Participation-----	20%
Policy Brief I-----	20%
Policy Brief II-----	30%
Short Writing Assignments-----	10%
Final Presentation-----	20%

Check with your university on requirements for length of research paper

According to general university policies, final course grades earned in this class will be worth the following points: A=4.0, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0, B-=2.7, C+=2.3, C=2.0, C-=1.7, D=1.0, F=0.

Participation (20%): Your participation grade depends on your attendance and participation and will be based on Q&A and class discussion. Everyone’s opinion should be respected whether you agree or disagree with a comment. Additionally, your grade will *never* depend on whether you agree with the professor or not. Instead, your participation will be based on your knowledge and facilitation of the readings, understanding of the issues discussed in the class, and the ability to clearly articulate your thoughts and ideas. Short quizzes on readings may be included at instructor’s discretion.

Policy Briefs (50%): Students will produce two issue briefs (8-10 pages each) on a policy topic complete with policy recommendations based on research and data. Detailed instructions to be given in class.

Short Writing Assignments (10%): Students will write two op-ed pieces aimed at conveying compelling policy narratives that influence public opinion. Detailed instructions to be given in class.

Final Presentation (20%): Students will deliver a public speaking presentation on one of their issue briefs to a guest expert panel. The presentation will mimic a shortened TED-style talk, however, students will be challenged to bring to life the results of their research on policy matters of the day in an effort to sway public opinion. Students will have received training and tips from various guest speakers on Capitol Hill and from the instructor throughout the semester in preparation for this presentation.

Course Rules and Regulations

Tardiness: Students are expected to be in class *on time*. If you are unable to attend class, make sure to discuss the reason with me before class time. Otherwise, the following penalties are in order: 1 unexcused absence = 5% overall grade reduction, 2 unexcused absences= 10% overall grade reduction, 3 unexcused absences = failing grade.

Policy on Weather Emergencies

In the event of a weather emergency, UCDC follows the federal government's decisions about delays and closures.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

UCDC has a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of dishonesty. Students should refer to their home campus Student Code of Conduct for the regulations that apply to them. The burden is on each student to know what behaviors constitute cheating and plagiarism. Ignorance of these behaviors is not an adequate defense. Academic integrity requires you to be responsible students with your research, writing, and scholarship. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and you are encouraged to talk with me if you need clarification on citations with regard to writing assignments.

Statement on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

The following language is the current UC Policy on Sexual Harassment and the process by which sexual misconduct is reported at UCDC. I have hyperlinked the Statement to the policy here. The link is <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000385/SHSV>.

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates this policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence.

Students who wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct should contact UCDC's Counseling Services at UCDCCounseling@gmail.com. To report sexual misconduct to ask questions about UCDC policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct, please contact the UCDC Title IX administrator, Josh Brimmeier (202-974-6214 or josh.brimmeier@ucdc.edu). Because the University of California is legally obligated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct, the confidentiality of reported misconduct cannot be guaranteed.

Statement on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The following language is the UC Policy on Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability. We have hyperlinked the Statement to the policy here. The link is <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710534/PACAOS140>. In compliance with the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Public Law 93- 112) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336), University of California policy prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability in its programs, services, and activities.

If you require accommodation for class, please let me know at our first meeting (if not earlier) so the necessary arrangements can be made.

Course Communication Tools (Email and Blackboard)

Week 1: Course Introduction and Overview: Narrating the Political Landscape in a Digital Age

Lupia, Arthur, *Uninformed*. Chapter 1: "From Infinite Ignorance to Knowledge that Matters," p. 124.

Oleszek, Walter, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, Chapter 1: "Congress and lawmaking," p.1-40.

Week 2: The Politics of Persuasion

Lupia, Arthur, *Uninformed*. Chapter 3: "Three Definitions," p. 1-24.

Cialdini, Robert. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. Chapter 1: "Weapons of Influence," p.117.

Arnold, R. Douglas, *The Logic of Congressional Action*, Chapter 4: Electoral Calculations and Legislators' Decisions, **p.60-87**

Week 3: Understanding the American Voter

Op-Ed Writing Assignment Due

Lupia, Arthur, *Uninformed*. Chapter 3: "The Silver Bullet," and Chapter 4: "the Logic of Competence," p. 33-59.

Lupia, Arthur, *Uninformed*. Chapter 14: "What We Know," Chapter 15: Reading the Questions, Understanding the Answers," p.191 – 217.

UCDC Syllabus
Dr. Menna Demessie

Campbell, Angus et. al, *The American Voter: Unabridged Edition*, Chapter 1, "Setting," and Chapter 2, "Theoretical Orientation," p. 3-37.

Week 4: Mining the Mind on Policy Matters

Cialdini, Robert. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. Chapter 2: "Reciprocation: The Old Give and Take...and Take" p.17-56.

Lupia, Arthur, *Uninformed*. Chapter 6: "Lost in the Woods," and Chapter 7: "Attracting Attention," p. 61-80.

Week 5: Polling, Public Opinion, and Policy

Asher, Herbert, *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, Chapter 6: "The Media and the Polls," p.104-123 and Chapter 7: "Polls and Elections," p.125-157.

Hutchings, Vincent. *Public Opinion and Democratic Accountability*. Chapter 1: "Issue Importance, Political Context, and Democratic Responsiveness," p. 1-17.

Sulkin, Tracy, *Issue Politics in Congress*, Chp 1: "Electoral Challenges and Legislative Responsiveness," p. 1-18 and Chp. 2: "A Theory of Issue Uptake," p, 19-43, and Ch 9: "Elections, Governance, and Representation," p.167-177.

Week 6: Social Pressures and Policymaking

Cialdini, Robert. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. Chapter 3: "Commitment and Consistency," p.57-113.

Dodd, Lawrence and Bruce Oppenheimer, *Congress Reconsidered*. Representative Daniel Lipinski, Chapter 15: "Navigating Congressional Policy Processes: The Inside Perspective," p.337-360.

Fiorina, Morris P. *Culture War?:* Chapter 1: "Culture War," p.1-7 and Chapter 7: Reconciling Micro and Macro," p.77-91.

Week 7: How Congress Works

Davidson, Roger H. and Walter J. Oleszek and Frances E. Lee, *Congress and Its Members: Thirteenth Edition*, Chapter 10: "Policymaking and the Change in the Two Congresses: Congress and the President," p.281-312.

Davidson, Roger H. and Walter J. Oleszek and Frances E. Lee, *Congress and Its Members: Thirteenth Edition*, Chapter 11: "Congress and the Bureaucracy," p.315-343.

Week 8: Representation and Race in the 21st Century

Clayton, Dewey M. *The Presidential Campaign of Barack Obama: A Critical Analysis of a Racially Transcendent Strategy*, Chapter 2: “Descriptive and Substantive Representation,” p.25-45.

Walton, Hanes Jr. and Robert Smith. *American Politics and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom*. Chp 11: “The Congress and the African American Quest for Universal Freedom” p.168-188.

Lupia, Arthur, *Uninformed*. Chapter 10: “Value Diversity and How to Manage It,” p. 105-131.

Singh, Robert. *The Congressional Black Caucus: Racial Politics in the U.S. Congress*, Chapter 3: The CBC: Caucus Origins and Organization,” p. 51-72.

Week 9: Innovation, Technology, and Politics in a Millennial Era

Clayton, Dewey M. *The Presidential Campaign of Barak Obama: A Critical Analysis of a Racially Transcendent Strategy*. Chapter 7: “Innovations in Technology and Media,” p.136-151

Lupia, Arthur, *Uninformed*. Chapter 8: “Building Source Credibility,” and Chapter 9: “The Politics of Competence, p. 81-104.

Haplin, John and Karl Agne. “The Political ideology of the Millennial Generation: A National Study of Political Values and Beliefs Among 18-29-Year-Old Adults: PART 1: Composite ideology and core political beliefs among Millennials,” p.1-32.

Week 10: Policy Matters of Consequence from Obama to Trump

Cohen, Cathy J and Matthew D. Luttig, and Jon C. Rogowski. *Generation Forward*. “Obama vs. Trump in the Minds of Millennials,” p. 1-40.

Haplin, John and Karl Agne. “The Political ideology of the Millennial Generation: A National Study of Political Values and Beliefs Among 18-29-Year-Old Adults: PART 2: Political values, ideological perceptions and ratings among Millennials,” p.32-55.

Berman, Ari. *Give Us the Ballot*, Chapter 10: “After Shelby,” p. 286 – 314.

Week 11: Perception as Reality: Truths and Fallacies

Lupia, Arthur, *Uninformed*. Chapter 11: “Complexity of Framing,” Chapter 12: “Political Roles: *Who Needs to Know*,” and Chapter 13, “Costs and Benefits,” p. 132-188.

Cialdini, Robert. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. Chapter 4: "Social Proof: Truths Ae Us," and Chapter 5, "Liking: *The Friendly Thief*," p. 87 – 156.

Week 12: Policy Matters of Consequence From Obama to Trump

Lupia, Arthur, *Uninformed*. Chapter 19: "The Silver Lining," p.283 – 289

Cialdini, Robert. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. Chapter 6: "Authority: Directed Deference," and Chapter 7: Scarcity: The Rule of the Few," p. 157 – 204.

Week 13: Final Presentations Group I: Guest Panel of Experts

Week 14: Final Presentations Group II: Guest Panel of Experts

In addition to the readings listed for each topic, additional materials may be provided in advance of class. This syllabus is subject to modification by the instructor.