Department: Communication
Graduate Program: Master of Arts in Communication
Course Number & Title: COMM 594: Political Communication
Total hours/week: 3
Number of Credits: Lectures: 3 Lab: ____________

Will this course be cross-listed with an undergraduate or other graduate course? □ YES x □ NO
If yes, please complete an attach to this proposal a Permission to Cross-List a Graduate Course form.
Course will first be offered: Spring 2012

Catalog description (Please limit to 50 words):
A review of theories of and strategies for political communication, covering such contexts and topics as political campaign communication, public opinion, and public affairs.

Prerequisites (or other restrictions)
None.

Rationale/Justification for course (consider the following issues):

a. What are the goals and objectives of the course?

This course on political communication has three goals:

1. To introduce students to the range of methods in which scholars have studied political communication.

2. To familiarize students with the communicative dynamics of historical case studies (campaigns, social movements, revolutions, etc.).

3. To equip students with a critical vocabulary so that they might parse political appeals, spot resonant themes in political discourse, and theorize ethics and decorum in political communication, including communication in public affairs and in campaign communication.

b. How does the course support the mission statement of the department and the organizing principles of the graduate program?

The departmental mission statement emphasizes preparation for leadership and engaged citizenship. This course focuses on the political communication theories relevant to the departmental mission.

Are other departments affected by this course? □ YES x □ NO
(Please attach letters of support from the chairs of each department indicating the Department has discussed and supports the proposal.)

If more space is needed for any section, please attach additional sheets to this form.

November 2007
This course is intended for students pursuing a graduate degree in communication. The Department of Communication is open to future collaboration with the M.P.A. program and the Department of Political Science, should current or future graduate programs have a need for graduate coursework in political communication.

Is this course part of a joint program? □ YES x□ NO If yes, at what institution?

Method of teaching:
Lecture/discussion

Expected changes

a. Address potential enrollment pattern shifts in the Department or University-wide as it relates to the offering of this course

This will be one elective course among several such courses in the department's graduate program. No meaningful enrollment shift is anticipated.

b. Address potential shifts in staffing of the departments as it relates to the offering of this course.

Several faculty colleagues in the department are qualified to teach this course. The course previously has been offered under a seminar number, with no challenge where departmental staffing is concerned.

Requirements for additional resources made necessary by this course. (Note: course requiring additional resources will need special justification.)

a. Staff

None. Multiple graduate faculty members in the Department of Communication are qualified to teach this course.

b. Budget

None. The department has the resources needed to support this course.

c. Library

None. The extant communication library budget provides sufficient support for the necessary serials and monographs relevant to this course.
Attach course syllabus, reading list, or any additional documentation that can help the committee evaluate this proposal. **A syllabus is mandatory.**

Signature of Program Director: ___________________________ Date: 2/22/10

Signature of Department Chair: __________________________ Date: 2/22/10

Additional Chair’s Signature*: __________________________ Date: 

Signature of Schools’ Dean: ___________________________ Date: 2/23/10

Additional Schools’ Dean Signature*: ___________________ Date: 

Signature of the Provost: _____________________________ Date: 2/23/2010

Signature of Budget Director**: __________________________ Date: 

*For interdisciplinary courses.  
**Business Affairs Office

Return form to the Graduate School Office for Further Processing

Signature of Chair of the Faculty Committee on Graduate and Continuing Education

_________________________ Date: 2/24/2010

Signature of Chair of Grad Council: ______________________ Date: 3/24/2010

Signature of the Faculty Secretary: ________________________ Date: 

If more space is needed for any section, please attach additional sheets to this form.
Communication 594: Political Communication

General Syllabus

Overview:
This seminar considers two broad questions: (1) What are the generic features of political language? (2) How can we evaluate the force of political language on social and political institutions? In the pursuit of answers to these broad questions, we will engage contemporary issues such as candidates’ rhetorical ploys to appear like average, red-blooded Americans and historical questions about the evolution of key terms in the American political lexicon. At its core, this class is a blend of rhetoric, media studies, and political theory. As such, one of our chief aims will be to outline several methods that scholars have used to answer these basic questions. We will read widely in the area of political style including historical case studies in the development of liberalism and conservatism as well as theoretical commentary from communication, political science, anthropology, and history. Throughout our readings we will consider the relationship between language and politics with the understanding that the latter is not possible without the former.

Books:
Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)


Drew Westen, The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation (New York: Public Affairs, 2008)

The remainder of the readings will be on WebCT.

Course Requirements:
Read the following policies carefully. Enrollment in the class constitutes agreement and understanding of these policies. Ignorance of these policies will not be an acceptable excuse for violating them.

Honor Code: At the College of Charleston, student conduct, including but not limited to academic honesty, is held to a high standard. Scholastic dishonesty is defined as any act violating the rights of another student in academic work or involving the misrepresentation of a students’ own work. Students who violate the College of Charleston’s guidelines on academic honesty risk earning zero points on the relevant assignment, an F for the course, and a permanent
academic record mark. Please see http://www.cofc.edu/StudentAffairs/general_info/honor_system/ for additional details.

Attendance: Success in this course depends on regular attendance and a faithful engagement with course readings and concepts. Please let me know if you need to miss class.

Tardiness: Come to class on time. If you must arrive late, please let me know in advance. The same goes for leaving class early.

Late & Unfinished Work: I only accept hard copies of papers. Turning work in late is highly discouraged. Any material turned in late without prior notice will be reduced 10 points per calendar day late. Please arrange to turn in assignments early if you plan to be absent on the day an assignment is due.

Email: I check my email regularly during normal business hours and am usually prompt in responding to messages. When given an assignment, please anticipate problems in advance and talk to me about it in class or send me an email with some time allotted for a response. As a general rule, try to allot 48 hours for a response to your emails.

Grievance Procedure: Occasionally, students are dissatisfied with some dimension of a course. In such cases, students should make grade appeals on specific assignments within one week of the return of the assignment. After that period has expired, the grade issued is final.

Special Needs: The College of Charleston provides reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities, including learning disabilities, which may affect their capacity to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. If you have any such needs, please talk to me as soon as possible.

Papers
1. Thought Book: Students are expected to respond to each week’s readings in a paper roughly 2-3 pages in length. Although I hope that each response takes aim at the major points in each week’s readings, you are free to pursue topics that strike you as interesting. I will distribute some key terms or questions the week before; these are intended as guides rather than rigid rules. To be clear, these papers are arguments in addition to the reading, not summaries of the reading or questions about the reading. All I expect from the thought book entries is to use the reading as a jumping off point for a creative, original argument that you would like to make. Make sure the argument you pursue (a) is one that can be more or less sustained in such a short paper and (b) is made with specific references to the readings. Your argument can go lots of different directions: a claim that some aspect of the reading is apt or mistaken, applying some concept in the reading to some historical episode, using a concept in the reading to speculate about American voters or political culture, etc. When I read the essays, I will be looking for the clarity of this argument, the strength of the evidence you use to prove it, and the quality of your writing. Thought book entries are due each week unless otherwise noted, and they will serve as entry points for class discussion. (20% of final grade)
2. **Leadership Essay:** Students will choose one week in which they will (a) produce an 8-10 page response to the readings and (b) lead discussion of their paper for 20 minutes. Please think of the essay as a longer extension of a thought book entry; you are free to make any claim that you would like so long as it relates to central issues in the readings and you can substantiate it. The only exception is that you may need to consult and cite outside readings on your topic as you complete your essay. Your leadership essay and presentation need not summarize the readings; both should feature your argument primarily. You do not have to discuss your paper in a didactic, conference-style presentation; you might even distribute discussion questions to lead us through your arguments, play video clips, songs, etc. (30% of final grade)

3. **Final Paper:** This course covers numerous topics related to political language and culture including the relationship of political labels to identity, historical political languages, language and social reality, and language and political leadership. Your final papers may pursue any of these lines of inquiry. Your papers may engage course concepts directly or indirectly. You may follow a theoretical line and take up different conceptions of political language; you may follow a historical-critical line and assess the enactment of political language by any number of political agents. Regardless of your choice, the paper should be 20-25 pages in length, and you should turn in a 1-2 page paper proposal by March 17. (50% of final grade)

**Paper Grading Criteria**

*In addition to argumentative content, I have high expectations for the quality and clarity of written assignments. In order to clarify these expectations, I will distribute several writing handouts throughout the semester that explain basic writing principles and tactical suggestions. Additionally, the following grade definitions should serve as a preliminary indicator of how your paper will be judged.*

**A paper** - Paper offers a succinct and clearly stated thesis that guides the essay. Your thesis should be provocative, possibly addressing an issue from a perspective that most readers have not considered, perhaps even changing the way they look at it altogether. To construct such a thesis, investigate the full range of positions on your issue. Carefully examine the underlying assumptions, values, ethos, and use of evidence in your sources, instead of taking them at face value. As always, you should demonstrate a command of written style, voice, mechanics, and syntax. The paper is clearly outlined within the first few paragraphs with a thorough preview that assists the reader in following the paper's major arguments. Paragraphs are fully developed and follow naturally from what precedes them; the introduction brings the reader into the case and the conclusion reinforces the reader's confidence in the writer's control of the paper. The style is appropriate to the writer's audience and purpose; stylistic variety is used for emphasis; the prose is clear, apt, free of errors and occasionally memorable. Evidence and citations are used effectively and are formatted correctly.

**B paper** - Often, this is the kind of paper that revision could have made into an A paper. The paper fits within an effectively defined scope, providing a clear thesis and strong textual evidence to support the argument. The prose of a B paper is persuasive and controlled, containing few major syntactical or grammatical errors. Paragraphs are cohesive. Some
transitions may be weak or mechanical. The logic of the paper is clear but not as sophisticated as that of an A paper. Interpretations of theories are plausible and supported with textual evidence; more than one source is considered. The arguments may be on the obvious or predictable side, though the writer does not consistently settle for the obvious. The reasoning is better than adequate; it is thoughtful, with some awareness of other points of view. The introduction and conclusion are clear, but perhaps not as forceful or appropriate to the case or audience as they could be. Paragraphs follow well and are appropriately divided. The expression demonstrates attention to sentence-level concerns. Not only is sentence structure correct, but subordination, emphasis, sentence length, and stylistic variation are generally used effectively. Some sentences could be improved, but it would be surprising to find serious sentence errors - comma splice, fragments, or fused sentences--in a "B" paper.

**Papers that slip into the lower range may have a simplistic thesis or develop sections of the paper that are unrelated to the thesis. Evidence may be lacking in key sections of the paper. Limited conceptual/theoretical problems may also result in a lower B grade. Writing and/or organization may negatively affect readability.

C paper – C papers take a clear stand on one debatable claim and provide sufficient evidence to support that position. Paper responds adequately to the essay topic, providing an argument that may be general or somewhat obvious. The thesis may be too broad or too general, or the writer may not have expressed a clear exigence for the paper's intended audience. Though an effort has been made to support the case with arguments, the arguments may be obvious or predictable; the paper may even lack some pertinent information. The paper may lack sufficient or appropriate textual evidence. The paper may need work on organization, paragraph development, and transitions. The logic of the paper may be strained and/or inconsistent. C (average) papers reflect average writing. Sentence structure is generally correct, although there may be a lack of elements such as subordination, sentence variety, and stylistic devices to achieve emphasis. Comma splices, unintentional fragments, fused sentences, subject/verb disagreements, and other mechanical errors may bring an otherwise fine paper into the low C or even D range.

F paper – The paper displays a lack of understanding of basic principles that guide scholarly endeavors. Examples include but are not limited to gross mistakes in citing source materials as well as significant errors in framing the paper. The case study or supporting arguments may be seriously flawed and unable to withstand even casual scrutiny.

Thanks to Alisse Theodore, Nancy Tuten, and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse for assistance with these criteria.

Course Grades:
*Final course grades are the result of an entire semester of quality work. To ensure a satisfactory course grade, students must succeed throughout the semester.
1. Thought book entries (20%)
2. Leadership essay (30%)
3. Final Paper (50%)
Grading Scale - Final course grades are assigned on the following scale:

90-100% = A
87-89% = B+
80-86% = B
77-79% = C+
70-76% = C
0-69% = F

Course Schedule:
***Students will need to access WebCT to find some readings listed on this schedule. Those readings will need to be printed and brought to class. The following course schedule may be changed according to the flow of discussions, assignments, or current events. Students will be given ample warning in the event of a change. Also, as I learn more about your interests, the readings may change slightly. Thus, it is always helpful to tell me about your impressions of the readings during discussion.

Week 1: Survey of Political Communication Research

Week 2: Language: It’s Imperfect, and It’s All We’ve Got
George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”
Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics”
Matt Taibbi, Excerpt from Spanking the Donkey
Murray Edelman, “Political Language and Political Reality”
Raymond Williams, “Introduction,” Keywords
(all readings on WebCT)

Week 3: Political Theory and Political Language
Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas”
J.G.A. Pocock, “Languages and their Implications”
Michael Calvin McGee, “The ‘Ideograph’”
Michael Calvin McGee, “The Origins of ‘Liberty’”
James Farr, “Understanding Conceptual Change Politically”
(all readings on WebCT)

Week 4: Political Style
Robert Hariman, The Political Style

Week 5: Political Language and Emotion
Drew Westen, The Political Brain (read part 1)

Week 6: Liberalism as a Political Language
Thomas Frank, excerpt from What’s the Matter with Kansas? (WebCT)
Paul Krugman, excerpt from The Conscience of a Liberal (WebCT)
Drew Westen, The Political Brain (excerpts from part 2)

Week 7: Conservatism as a Political Language
Mark Smith, Right Talk (read part 1)
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Week 8: Conservatism as a Political Language
Mark Smith, Right Talk (read part 2)
William F. Buckley, “Did You Ever See a Dream Walking?” (WebCT)
Frank Meyer, “Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism” (WebCT)

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10: Populism as a Political Language
Michael Kazin, The Populist Persuasion (read part 1)

Week 11: Populism as a Political Language
Michael Kazin, The Populist Persuasion (read part 2)
PROSPECTUS DUE

Week 12: Fascism as a Political Language
Robert Ivie, “Fighting Terror By Rite of Redemption and Reconciliation”
John M. Murphy, “Our Mission and Our Moment”; George W. Bush and September 11th
Jeremy Engels, “Friend or Foe? Naming the Enemy”
Jennifer Barker, “The Myth of the Fascist Man in Gladiator and Fight Club”
Stephen Gencarella Olbrys, “Seinfeld’s Democratic Vistas”
(all readings on WebCT)

Week 13: Institutions and Political Language
Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Presidents Creating the Presidency

Week 14: The Language of Democracy: Or, Just How Stupid Are We?
Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life
Susan Jacoby, The Age of American Unreason
Al Gore, The Assault on Reason
Louis Menand, “The Political Animal”
(all readings on WebCT)

Week 15: Paper Presentations