



## Seminar in American Politics: Grassroots Engagement for Political Change

### GVPT 479E

**Term:** Fall 2023

**Professor:** Amy D. Meli

**Pronouns:** she/her/hers

**Email:** [amydmeli@umd.edu](mailto:amydmeli@umd.edu)

**Office Location:** 1140C Tydings Hall

**Office Hours:** Thursdays 10:00 am – 12:00 pm and by request

**Course Dates:** September 5 – December 7, 2023

**Credits:** 3

**Course Times:** Tuesdays/Thursdays from 12:30 – 1:45

**Classroom:** ESJ 2309

### Course Description

In this course, students will learn how grassroots movements impact political outcomes and how to engage the public in order to make political change.

While President, FDR famously told a lobbyist after a meeting, “You’ve convinced me. Now go out and force me.” He knew that the lobbyist’s position was correct, but he needed to hear support from the public in order to move forward with the policy. Grassroots movements are often the driving force behind changes in public opinion on key issues, the success or failure of landmark legislation, and the election or defeat of public officials. Through the course of the semester, we will learn how the human brain drives how people think about issues, how cultural movements often manifest themselves through art or culture before they appear in politics, and how to leverage new technology and data to support grassroots work. But most importantly, we will examine how the most effective way to change minds is through human relationships, which is why building relationships through trust is the ultimate work of a grassroots organizer.

### Learning Outcomes

1. Understand and execute a grassroots stakeholder analysis that identifies family, friends, foes, and strangers in an advocacy campaign.
2. Understand the three different types of grassroots advocacy (community advocacy, legislative advocacy, and campaign advocacy) and how the strategies employed by each type of campaign is driven by the issue’s location within the life cycle.
3. Understand how the use of data, technology, and messaging can all have an impact on the outcome of the campaign.
4. Demonstrate mastery of the above learning objectives by completing an original grassroots engagement plan.

### Required Resources

- Course Website: [elms.umd.edu](https://elms.umd.edu)
- This course utilizes a mix of academic journal articles, book sections, and audio visual materials in lieu of a textbook. All reading materials will be available on the course ELMS site two weeks prior to the time they will be discussed. There are a few class sessions where the required “reading” is a movie. All movies are available on streaming services. If you have trouble accessing any of the movies, please let me know and I will make the materials available to you.

- Total Estimated costs of required course materials: \$10

## Tips for Success in this Course

1. **Participate.** I invite you to engage deeply, ask questions, and talk about the course content with your classmates. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and professor. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
2. **Manage your time.** Students are often very busy, and I understand that you have obligations outside of this class. However, students do best when they plan adequate time that is devoted to course work. Block your schedule and set aside plenty of time to complete assignments including extra time to handle any technology related problems.
3. **Login regularly.** I recommend that you log in to ELMS-Canvas several times a week to view announcements, discussion posts and replies to your posts. You may need to log in multiple times a day when group submissions are due.
4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous content. If you feel you are starting to fall behind, check in with the instructor as soon as possible so we can troubleshoot together. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind in the pre-work or post-work.
5. **Use ELMS-Canvas notification settings.** Pro tip! Canvas ELMS-Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable announcements to be sent instantly or daily.
6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you need help with ELMS-Canvas or other technology, IT Support. If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me and your classmates for support.

## Policies and Resources for Undergraduate Courses

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit [www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html) for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

## Course Guidelines

### Names/Pronouns and Self-Identifications:

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to in this class, both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). Keep in mind that the pronouns someone uses are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit [trans.umd.edu](http://trans.umd.edu) to learn more.

Additionally, it is your choice whether to disclose how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

### **Communication with Instructor:**

Email: If you need to reach out and communicate with me, please email me at amydmeli@umd.edu. Please DO NOT email me with questions that are easily found in the syllabus or on ELMS (i.e. When is this assignment due? How much is it worth? etc.) but please DO reach out about personal, academic, and intellectual concerns/questions. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours.

ELMS: I will send IMPORTANT announcements via ELMS messaging. You must make sure that your email & announcement notifications (including changes in assignments and/or due dates) are enabled in ELMS so you do not miss any messages. You are responsible for checking your email and Canvas/ELMS inbox with regular frequency.

### **Communication with Peers:**

With a diversity of perspectives and experience, we may find ourselves in disagreement and/or debate with one another. As such, it is important that we agree to conduct ourselves in a professional manner and that we work together to foster and preserve a virtual classroom environment in which we can respectfully discuss and deliberate controversial questions. I encourage you to confidently exercise your right to free speech—bearing in mind, of course, that you will be expected to craft and defend arguments that support your position. Keep in mind, that free speech has its limit and this course is NOT the space for hate speech, harassment, and derogatory language. I will make every reasonable attempt to create an atmosphere in which each student feels comfortable voicing their argument without fear of being personally attacked, mocked, demeaned, or devalued.

Any behavior (including harassment, sexual harassment, and racially and/or culturally derogatory language) that threatens this atmosphere will not be tolerated. Please alert me immediately if you feel threatened, dismissed, or silenced at any point during our semester together and/or if your engagement in discussion has been in some way hindered by the learning environment.

## **Major Assignments**

### **Attendance and Participation**

I expect you to come to class prepared to attend and participate in class in a way that demonstrates comprehension of the assigned reading. This may involve pop quizzes, which will be given at my discretion. If you are reading this sentence, you qualify for extra credit. Email me by Friday, September 15 and I will add one extra point to the top of your grade. Reading the syllabus is important!

IMPORTANT: Pop quizzes will take place at the beginning of the class session. If you are late, I will still collect all quizzes 15 minutes after the start of class, regardless of successful completion. Any quiz missed due to an unexcused absence will result in a zero grade (with no exceptions). An absence will only be excused if you present the appropriate documentation. If you miss a quiz due to an excused absence, me within one week following your

return to class in order to arrange a makeup. Failure to arrange a makeup date within this one-week period will result in a zero grade for the missed quiz.

### **Government & Politics Subject Pool Participation**

Scholarly discovery depends, in large part, on research methods. Exposure to research methods is a valuable learning tool for students trying to understand research in political science. Some of the most exciting and cutting-edge research is being conducted right here at Maryland, and so there's no better opportunity to learn about research in political science than by participating in research studies. The Government and Politics department encourages students to gain hands-on research experience and knowledge. To support students in gaining this knowledge, students who take part in two studies conducted by GVPT faculty and graduate students will receive participation credit. I have allotted 5% of your final course grade to support this endeavor. Students who complete all of the required studies will receive full credit for this grade component; those who do not will receive no credit.

Each study will take about 20-30 minutes to complete. If you prefer not to serve as a participant, you may elect to satisfy the requirement by writing a 3-5 page review of a quantitative research article. (If you are under 18 years old, you must have parental assent on file for you to participate in a research study, or you may choose to write the paper instead.) However, you must notify the Research Administrator before the last day of schedule adjustment for the semester if you wish to register for the research alternative. Please note: you must participate in all of the studies this semester (or write the review paper) to receive credit.

### **Assignments**

You will complete six assignments over the course of the class. The assignments will ask you to apply material you learned in class and through the assigned readings. The goal of the assignments are to apply what you have learned in class to the outside world of politics. Late submissions will be accepted, but will be subject to a 10% penalty per day beyond the due date. Your lowest assignment grade will be dropped and not counted toward your final grade.

### **Final Project – Grassroots Plan**

During the last three weeks of the semester, you will complete an original grassroots plan on a current legislative issue that you choose. The purpose of this assignment is to apply the concepts you learn in class to a real-world context. Details about this project will be provided later in the semester.

### **Grading Structure**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points on final grade</b>
<b>Class Participation</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>GVPT Subject Pool</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Assignments (each worth 10% of your grade, lowest dropped)</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Final Project Part 1</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Final Project Part 2</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## Academic Integrity

For this course, some of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course ELMS page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work. For information about Turnitin, how it works, and the feedback reports you may have access to, visit [Turnitin Originality Checker for Students](#)

The University's Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principles of academic honesty and integrity are upheld. In accordance with this code, the University of Maryland does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this code and its implications because all acts of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this code. All students are expected to adhere to this Code. It is your responsibility to read it and know what it says, so you can start your professional life on the right path. **As future professionals, your commitment to high ethical standards and honesty begins with your time at the University of Maryland.**

It is important to note that course assistance websites, such as CourseHero, or AI generated content are not permitted sources, unless the instructor explicitly gives permission. Material taken or copied from these sites can be deemed unauthorized material and a violation of academic integrity. These sites offer information that might be inaccurate or biased and most importantly, relying on restricted sources will hamper your learning process, particularly the critical thinking steps necessary for college-level assignments.

Additionally, students may naturally choose to use online forums for course-wide discussions (e.g., Group lists or chats) to discuss concepts in the course. However, collaboration on graded assignments is strictly prohibited unless otherwise stated. Please visit the [Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies](#) and reach out if you have questions.

Finally, on each exam or assignment you must write out and sign the following pledge: ***"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."*** If you ever feel pressured to comply with someone else's academic integrity violation, please reach out to me straight away. Also, ***if you are ever unclear*** about acceptable levels of collaboration, ***please ask!***

## Grades

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. If you would like to review any of your grades (including assignment grades), or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet and discuss. I am happy to discuss any of your grades with you, and if I have made a mistake I will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade. Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned.

All assignments are worth the number of points listed in the table above. At the end of the semester, I will add up all of the points earned in the class to calculate the final grade. To be fair to everyone I have to establish clear standards and apply them consistently. Final course grades will be rounded up to the next whole number. For example, a 93.5 will be rounded up to a 94. A 93.4 will not be rounded up. It would not be equitable to make exceptions for some and not others.

Final Grade Cutoffs									
+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%	+	67.00%	+	
A	94.00%	B	84.00%	C	74.00%	D	64.00%	F	<60.0%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%	-	60.00%	-	

## Course Outline

Week #	Dates	Topic	Assignment	Reading Due
1	Aug. 29 Aug. 31	No Class No Class		n/a n/a
2	Sept. 5 Sept. 7	Introduction Vision & strategy		<a href="#">The New West</a> (documentary)
3	Sept. 12 Sept. 14	Audience Analysis Part 1 Audience analysis part 2	Mission Statement	Grefe Pollan
4	Sept. 19 Sept. 21	Influentials Part 1 No Class	Audience analysis	<a href="#">First Follower</a> (video) n/a
5	Sept. 26 Sept. 28	Influentials Part 2 Issue Life Cycle and Sponsoring Orgs		Lohmann
6	Oct. 3 Oct. 5	Power Mapping Part 1 Power Mapping Part 2		Tang Lipton and Vogel
7	Oct. 10 Oct. 12	Social trends Message and story	Power map	Bishop, Putnam <i>Milk (movie)</i> The Modern Family Effect
8	Oct. 17 Oct. 19	No Class Listening to understand	Social trends article	n/a <a href="#">Carl Rogers and the Art of Active Listening</a>
9	Oct. 24 Oct. 26	Community organizing part 1 Community organizing part 2	Process recording	Alinsky, Broockman and Kalla <a href="#">The Daily podcast</a> Is there any point to protesting?
10	Oct. 31 Nov. 2	Legislative campaigns part 1 Legislative campaigns part 2		Han CMF Reports
11	Nov. 7 Nov. 9	Legislative campaigns part 3 Legislative campaigns part 4	Action alert	Meli and Grefe Astroturfing Lobbying on a Shoestring
12	Nov. 14 Nov. 16	Electoral campaigns part 1 Electoral campaigns part 2		Green and Gerber Green and Gerber
13	Nov. 21 Nov. 23	Bringing it all together No Class (Thanksgiving)		<i>Pride</i> (movie)
14	Nov. 28 Nov. 30	Final project Part 1 Final project work session	In class presentations	
15	Dec. 5	Final project work session		

	Dec. 7	Final project work session		
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Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course ELMS page for current deadlines. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.

## Resources & Accommodations

### Accessibility and Disability Services

The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The [Accessibility & Disability Service \(ADS\)](#) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known. Any student who needs accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that I have sufficient time to make arrangements.

For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682, or email them at [adsfrontdesk@umd.edu](mailto:adsfrontdesk@umd.edu). Information about [sharing your accommodations with instructors, note taking assistance](#) and more is available from the [Counseling Center](#).

### Student Resources and Services

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit [UMD’s Student Academic Support Services website](#) to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you.

In particular, everyone can use some help sharpening their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting [UMD’s Writing Center](#) and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center.

You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need ([UMD’s Student Resources and Services website](#) may help). If you feel it would be helpful to have someone to talk to, visit [UMD’s Counseling Center](#) or [one of the many other mental health resources on campus](#).

### Notice of Mandatory Reporting

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible University Employee,” and I must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to UMD’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy on Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Misconduct.

If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of UMD’s confidential resources, such as [CARE to Stop Violence](#) (located on the Ground Floor of the Health Center) at 301-741-3442 or the [Counseling Center](#) (located at the Shoemaker Building) at 301-314-7651.

You may also seek assistance or supportive measures from UMD’s Title IX Coordinator, Angela Nastase, by calling 301-405-1142, or emailing [titleXcoordinator@umd.edu](mailto:titleXcoordinator@umd.edu).



To view further information on the above, please visit the [Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct's](http://ocrsm.umd.edu) website at [ocrsm.umd.edu](http://ocrsm.umd.edu).

### **Basic Needs Security**

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, please visit [UMD's Division of Student Affairs website](#) for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

### **Veteran Resources**

UMD provides some additional supports to our student veterans. You can access those resources at the office of [Veteran Student life](#) and the [Counseling Center](#). Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor.

### **Course Evaluation**

Please submit a course evaluation through Student Feedback on Course Experiences in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to Course Experiences is confidential. Campus will notify you when Student Feedback on Course Experiences is open for you to complete your evaluations at the end of the semester. Please go directly to the [Student Feedback on Course Experiences](#) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing through Testudo the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

### **Copyright Notice**

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