

PMMA: Data and Communication

Syllabus subject to change—always see Blackboard for current version. Or email instructor (sbhaskar@fordham.edu).

Obtaining, interpreting, visualizing and displaying data are essential skills for communication professionals in the 21st Century. Your success as a communications professional depends on your data literacy and your ability to assess and evaluate arguments based on data. This course, featuring hands on practice and examples, will discuss a wide range of data based communications from campaign strategy, to data journalism and advertising tactics. Students will also work on 2 in-depth projects that require a demonstrable understanding of data, visualization, strategy, testing and evaluation.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- Gain an understanding of how data fundamentally altered and furthered communications professions including campaigns, journalism, and marketing.
- Learn to conceptually target audiences and how to do so within a variety of digital platforms.
- Gain the ability to create data-driven messages for a variety of awareness, creation, persuasion and mobilizing goals and tactics.
- Learn how to analyze web and social media data using a variety of analytics tools and approaches.
- Get an introduction to basic data analysis skills.

Required Texts: There is no book; readings (all mandatory) will be made available via email or linked in syllabus.

Assignments: Participation and short reading responses: 30%

This class is a seminar, and therefore, requires active participation from students. You are free to use your prepared responses/questions to participate, and are encouraged to bring relevant examples, questions, and connections to class. Insofar as class involves hands on learning, participation in and completion of assignments is vital to your grade, and cannot be made up outside of class. Please plan on attending all scheduled classes. If you have to miss a session, contact the instructor with plenty of advance notice and prepare to make up participation through a written assignment.

Each week's readings will be paired with a writing prompt. You are expected to write 300-500

words to submit via email before our Thursday meetings. These submissions will help shape class discussion.

Message critique: 30%

Select a series of messages/campaign/advertisement for a cause/publication etc, and assess its goals and how it is targeting its audiences. Students should do the following: 1. Describe and assess its theory of change. 2. Research and describe its target audiences and assess its targeting choices 3. Discuss at least one other possible choice of audience and how to construct a message for that audience.

Final project: 40%

Write a 3-5 page, concise, targeted memo for a real or created organization outlining a messaging plan. Include a description of your goals, theory of change, target audiences, data collection, analysis and evaluation. Choose at least 2 channels (like email, social, website, direct mail, etc) that you would use to reach your goals. If you are more interested in journalism, how should you cover this organization's work?

GRADES: For most graduate coursework and graduate tutorials, the GSAS assigns letter grades corresponding to a 4-point scale as follows:

- A Outstanding = 4.0
- A- Excellent = 3.75
- B+ Very good = 3.5
- B Good = 3.0
- B- Pass = 2.75
- C Minimal pass = 2.0
- F Fail = 0.0

There are no grades of "C+", "C-", or "D" in the GSAS. For most research and reading courses, a grade of "P" ("Pass") replaces a letter grade.

COURSE READINGS AND CLASS SCHEDULE:

I. Foundations

Week 1. Introduction and syllabus discussion

Week 2. The history of data and data analytics

Readings, videos and podcasts

- ["A brief history of big data everyone should read"](#), World Economic Forum, 2015

- [“A Very Short History Of Big Data”](#), Forbes, 2013
- [“How is Data Science Changing the World?”](#), Toward Data Science, 2019
- [“Making data analytics work for you—instead of the other way around”](#), McKinsey, 2016

Data Skills (in class)

- “Fake data creation” ([form](#))
- [How to Organize Your Life With Spreadsheets](#)

Week 3. Data in politics; Data in marketing

Readings, videos and podcasts

- [How Data is Transforming Politics | Democratic National Committee](#), YouTube (42mins), 2019
- [The Campaign Data Arms Race](#), Karl Rove, WSJ, 2019
- [4 Ways Data Science Is Changing Marketing For Brands And Consumers](#), NorthCentral University, 2019
- [“Polling Is Ubiquitous, But Is It Bad For Democracy?”](#), Fresh Air podcast (23mins), 2016

Data Skills

- Understanding spreadsheets
- Formatting and navigating

Week 4. Data in journalism

Readings, videos and podcasts

- [News by Numbers: The evolution of analytics in journalism](#), Nicole Blanchett Neheli, 2018
- [Journalism+Design: The Hunt for News Products of the Future | The New School](#) (84 mins)

Data Skills

- Data types

Week 5. Limits of a data driven approach

Readings, videos and podcasts

- [“Eight \(No, Nine!\) Problems With Big Data”](#) NYTimes Op-Ed
- [Reviews of “Weapons of Math Destruction”](#) (read 3-5 reviews), Cathy O’Neil
- [Revolutions Don’t Come out of A/B Tests](#), InvisionApp
- [“Finding the Modal American”](#) -- NPR 2019 (28 mins)

Data Skills

- Finding datasets online, downloading, openingp

Week 6. Storytelling with Data

- [2017 Best Data Visualizations](#)
- [NYTimes 2018 Visualizations](#)
- [Flowing Data, Best Visualizations of 2019](#)
- [ProPublica, NewsApps](#)
- [Reddit: Data is Beautiful](#)
- You can also pick data visualizations or stories not on this list.

II. Goals and Audiences

Week 7. Persuasion & mobilization

Readings, videos and podcasts

- [Peoria Project Brief](#), 2018
- [How Turnout-Only Politics Gave Us the 2016 Campaign—And a Historic Polling Upset](#), Politico 2016
- [Are Elections About Mobilizing or Persuading Voters? It Depends on the Race and Who You Ask](#), Paul Rader, Medium, 2019

Data Skills

- Cleaning data

Week 8. Targeting and Segmentation

Readings, videos and podcasts

- [Cambridge Analytica explains how the Trump campaign worked](#), YouTube (40mins), 2017
- [Targeted Campaign Appeals and the Value of Ambiguity](#) Hersh & Schaffner, 2013
- [Two Sides of the Coin Assessing the Influence of Social Network Site Use During the 2012 U.S. Presidential Campaign](#) Zhang, Seltzer, Bichard, 2013

Data Skills

- Sorting & Filtering

Week 9. Journalism audiences

Readings, videos and podcasts

- [As newsrooms seek new audiences, their perceptions of readers are slow to change](#), James Robinson, 2019

- [The Traffic Factories: Metrics at Chartbeat, Gawker Media, and The New York Times](#), Caitlin Petre, 2015

Data skills

- Pivot tables

Week 10. No in-class meeting

Submit “Message Critique” via email

IV. Data-driven messages across platforms

Week 11. Facebook targeting

Readings, videos and podcasts

- [The Beginner's Guide to Facebook Audiences and Targeting](#), AdEspresso
- [Facebook ad-targeting guide](#), Facebook
- [How to Master Facebook Ad Targeting & Zero-In on Your Audience](#), SproutSocial, 2018
- [Facebook's political ad problem, explained by an expert](#), Vox, 2019

Data skill

- VLookup & If/Then

Week 12. Email targeting & Web analytics

Readings, videos and podcasts

- [Mailchimp automations](#), 2019
- [Google Analytics Basics](#) 2015
- [“A/B and see: a beginner's guide to A/B testing”](#) InVision App, 2015

Week 13. No in-class meeting

Week 14. Privacy

Readings, videos and podcasts

- [Privacy project](#) (select 3-4 OpEds), NYTimes, 2019

Data skill

- Find dataset online and work on answering a set of questions

Week 15. Final project discussion + dataset finding

Week 16. Working period, no in-class meeting

Week 17. Submit final project (via email)