

Course Syllabus

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PS 4355 – 001

AMERICAN POLITICS IN MASS MEDIA

Spring 2026

1/12/26 – 5/2/26

Tuesdays and Thursdays - 2PM-3:20PM

RBN 3038

Dr. Kenneth Bryant Jr.

CAS 125

kbryant@uttyler.edu

Office Hours: T TR 3:30PM-4:55PM

Note - This syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class.

Introduction

This course explores how political power is built, framed, and sold through media, money, and storytelling by placing students inside a semester-long Super PAC simulation where they analyze films, real campaign data, and public opinion while designing political messages and wrestling with the ethical consequences of persuasion at scale.

Grade

Memos, Briefs, and Production - 60%

In-Class Assignments - 40%

Student Health Center are not sufficient documentation of a serious illness; or B) a copy of an obituary, in the unfortunate case you have to attend a funeral; C) proof of extremely prohibitive circumstances

(such as being in an auto accident on the way to campus or a family emergency). The make-up exam you take will be different from the exam taken by the rest of the class and may include essay questions. No other excuses will be accepted for a missed exam.

Note – I will *not* be offering “extra credit” opportunities.

Grade Assignment

Below 60 = F

60 and less than 70 = D

70 and less than 80 = C

80 and less than 90 = B

90 and less than 100 = A

Class Disruptions

Repeated talking, texting, or surfing the web on laptops is not acceptable in this class. These actions are distracting. Such disruptions harm the learning environment. Incidents of texting, talking, or surfing the web in class will result in a discussion between the instructor and the student(s) involved. Believe you me, it just ain't worth the hassle, you can Instagram after class.

Required Readings

Provided on Canvas Modules.


UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do. Students Rights and Responsibilities To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.utt Tyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>
[⤵ \(http://www.utt Tyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php\)](http://www.utt Tyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php)


Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.utt Tyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php> [⤵ \(http://www.utt Tyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php\)](http://www.utt Tyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php)

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free 
(<http://www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free>)

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. (For Fall, the Census Date is Sept. 12.) Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar> 
(<http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>). Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar. Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.



The Census Date (Sept. 12th) is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid State-Mandated Course

Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date). Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler>  (<https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler>) and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>  (<http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>), the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester. (Revised 05/17)

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

“Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student’s test paper;
- using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed “crib notes”. The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
- paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
- falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
- taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

“Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit.

“Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.











All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.














UT Tyler Resources for Students













- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu (<mailto:writingcenter@uttyler.edu>)
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu (<mailto:tutoring@uttyler.edu>)











- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)




Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Mon Jan 5, 2026	 Final Project Group Sign-Up Sheet	to do: 11:59pm
	 Media Autopsy Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057483)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Jan 25, 2026	 Screening - Good Night and Good Luck (2005) OR (2024) (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1060487)	due by 11:59pm
	 Video Briefing Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057485)	due by 11:59pm
	 Ethics & Responsibility Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057499)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 1, 2026	 Leadership Pitch Video Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057501)	due by 11:59pm
	 Super PAC Brand Bible (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057498)	due by 11:59pm
	 Audience Profile Brief (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057488)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 8, 2026	 Choose Your Issue Priorities (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057505)	due by 11:59pm
	 Video Strategy Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057497)	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
Sun Feb 15, 2026	 Message Justification Video Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057504)	due by 11:59pm
	 Pro-Stance Message Brief (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057502)	due by 11:59pm
	 Representation Reflection (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057503)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 1, 2026	 Platform Logic Video Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057529)	due by 11:59pm
	 Produced Social Media Ad (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057527)	due by 11:59pm
	 Targeting & Platform Rationale Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057528)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 15, 2026	 Creative Pitch Video Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057526)	due by 11:59pm
	 Pro-Stance TV Ad Package (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057525)	due by 11:59pm
	 Storyboard Draft (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057524)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 22, 2026	 Pro-Stance Audio / Podcast Ad (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057532)	due by 11:59pm
	 Pro-Stance Print Ad (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057530)	due by 11:59pm
	 Producer's Commentary Video Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057545)	due by 11:59pm
	 Tone & Trust Strategy Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057538)	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
Sun Apr 5, 2026	 Ethics Analysis Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057559)	due by 11:59pm
	 Final Negative Ad (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057558)	due by 11:59pm
	 Negative Ad Script (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057557)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 12, 2026	 Campaign Alignment Video Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057552)	due by 11:59pm
	 Cross-Platform Message Bundle (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057548)	due by 11:59pm
	 War-Room Messaging Packet (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057628)	due by 11:59pm
Mon Apr 20, 2026	 War-Room Stand-Up Video Memo (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057631)	due by 11:59pm
	 Reflection Presentation (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057690)	due by 11:59pm
	 Final Campaign Portfolio (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057687)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 26, 2026	 Reflection Essay (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1057689)	due by 11:59pm
	 In-Class Activity - AI, Outrage, and Elections (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1075808)	
	 In-Class Activity - Campaign Websites (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1075205)	

Date	Details	Due
	 <u>In-Class Activity - Mapping Misinformation and Conspiracies</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1075147)	
	 <u>In-Class Activity - Moral Panic in the Wild</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1074950)	
	 <u>In-Class Activity - Political Feeding Frenzies and Media Spectacle</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1075008)	
	 <u>In-Class Activity - Schadenfreude, Power, and Viral Politics</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1074947)	
	 <u>In-Class Activity - What Do We Know About Polling?</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1074739)	
	 <u>In-Class Discussion - How News Literate Are You?</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1074737)	
	 <u>In-Class Discussion - The Dark Money Game</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1065350)	
	 <u>In-Class Discussion: How Propaganda Is Destroying Democracy</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1066430)	
	 <u>In-Class Film Lab - The Candidate (1972)</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1075761)	
	 <u>In-Class Listen and Research - Do Negative Political Ads Work?</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1075801)	

Date	Details	Due
	 <u>In-Class Reflection - Crime, Media, and Public Attention</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1074874)	
	 <u>In-Class Research Assignment - OpenSecrets</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1065353)	
	 <u>In-Class Simulation - Which Messages Travel?</u> (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51850/assignments/1075183)	