

# **Money and Politics**

**Class:** JOUR479M

**Instructor:** Glen Justice

**Days:** Tuesdays and Thursdays

**Time:** 3 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.

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**Office Hours:** By appointment or call anytime

## **PREREQUISITES AND EXPECTATIONS**

The expectation is that incoming students are proficient – at a professional news level – in the following areas:

- Fundamentals of journalism such as newsworthiness, accuracy, deadlines, objectivity and fairness.
- Basic news writing skills, including spelling, grammar, AP style, attribution, the “inverted pyramid” structure, single-sentence paragraphs, crisp and compelling news ledes and the use of quotations.
- Basic reporting techniques, including rudimentary interviewing skills, the use of commercial databases (Nexis-Lexis) and the Internet to background stories and find news documents.
- Reporting and Writing of basic, short news stories such as obituaries, accidents, speeches, meetings and crimes.

## **ABOUT THE COURSE**

Money in Politics is a 3-credit specialty course designed to provide a working knowledge of the federal campaign finance system and the lobbying culture in Washington, and teach you how to write about these topics for a newspaper, magazine or broadcast outlet. The class will pull back the veil on the world of political fund-raising and lobbying and explain how to “follow the money” by using public records on file at the Federal Election Commission, the Internal Revenue Service and elsewhere.

Emphasis will be placed on the skills needed to find basic campaign finance numbers and lobbying information, understand the information correctly and use it to write authoritative news stories. These are skills that can help you throughout your career. You can use them to produce enterprise pieces that report directly on money and lobbying, or to craft paragraphs that enhance other stories by adding these angles. Both approaches will help on just about any beat in the newsroom.

The topics covered include:

- A brief – and interesting (I promise) – history of the campaign finance system and how it has evolved, including the post-Watergate reforms and what emerged from subsequent legal challenges; the birth of political action committees and their impact on lobbying; the rise of “soft money” and its impact on political parties; and the changes brought by Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, better known as the McCain-Feingold law, passed in 2002.
- How the campaign finance system works in theory, and how it works in practice.
- Who fund-raisers are and what they actually do.
- How to dissect the financing behind a single candidate, two candidates in a race, or an entire state delegation.
- How to background political groups, from “527 committees” to political action committees.
- How the lobbying system works and how it impacts companies, interest groups, officeholders and lobbyists themselves.
- A basic understanding of Washington’s lobbying landscape, including an introduction to blue chip players like the National Rifle Association, the National Association of Realtors, Emily’s List and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.
- What lobbyists actually do – and what they don’t.
- How to dissect an interest group or lobby, establish who the big players are, figure out what they want and their strategy to get it.
- Understanding the presidential public financing system and the unique challenges it faces in 2008.
- The complex relationship between fund-raising and lobbying.
- Lobbying and campaign finance on the state and local level.
- How to develop money and lobbying stories, both for print and for broadcast.
- Developing the proper news judgment to apply to stories that involve money and lobbying.

## **READINGS, WEB SITES & SOFTWARE**

You are not required to buy any books for this class. Reading for the course will include the following:

- Handouts, including news stories, reference materials and tip sheets.
- A copy of “Quick Answers on Campaign Money,” an in-house primer I wrote for *The New York Times*. I will provide this at our first class.
- Several helpful web pages, which you will be consulting regularly. These include: the Federal Election Commission ([www.FEC.gov](http://www.FEC.gov)); the Center for Responsive Politics ([www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)); and PoliticalMoneyLine ([www.politicalmoneyline.com](http://www.politicalmoneyline.com)).
- *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and/or *The Wall Street Journal*, which you should be reading regularly. Other publications that cover

- money in politics well are *National Journal*, *Congressional Quarterly*, *Roll Call*, *The Hill*, *The Boston Globe* and the *Los Angeles Times*.
- Reference materials such as *The Associated Press Stylebook* and a pocket dictionary will not cause you any harm.

## HELPFUL TOOLS

Two things will help you in this class:

- I recommend getting a calculator with a display that goes into the hundreds of millions (billions is even better). It may be large and it may cost a few bucks – I got mine at Radio Shack for \$20+ a few years ago – but it’s enormously helpful. Staples and Office Depot may have good selections, though I have not looked.
- A working knowledge of Microsoft Excel, or any spreadsheet program, and Microsoft Access, or any database program, helps a great deal when dealing with campaign finance data. If you don’t have these skills, you can start building them in this class.

## SPEAKERS & FILMS

If all goes well, we will view several films and documentaries and hear from several guest speakers throughout the semester.

Speakers will include lobbyists, fund-raisers, watchdogs and journalists of all stripes. These people donate their time when they visit us to explain how the system works and describe their roles. Whatever their political leanings – Democrat, Republican, Independent or otherwise – they deserve to be treated with respect. You will be free, in most cases, to ask them any question you like. But please do so with courtesy.

One more important point: I expect 100 percent attendance when we have guest speakers. Nobody wants to take time out of their schedule to address an empty room!

## ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

I am a former staff writer for *The New York Times*, where I covered campaign finance and lobbying for the paper’s Washington bureau. I joined the paper after covering the same beat with a business focus for *Bloomberg News*. Prior to that, I worked as a state house reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*; and as a suburban reporter for *The Times-Picayune*; and held internships at the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Boston Globe*. I began writing professionally when I was 19, long before I earned my degree in journalism from the University of Southern California. I later did some graduate work in business at Tulane University, but left to take a better job – sans degree. I am 37 and live on Capitol Hill with my wife, Petula Dvorak, a general assignment reporter for *The Washington Post*. We met at the college paper, appropriately named *The Daily Trojan*. Our son, Milo, celebrated his second birthday in July, and we have another son – as yet unnamed – due in December.

## COMMUNICATING WITH ME

Don't be afraid to reach out if you have questions on the material in this class, on the assignments, on your grades or on any other journalism-related topic. I enjoy talking with students – that's why I teach. So don't be shy about calling or writing. This is especially true if a problem arises. I'd rather hear about it early, when we can work out a solution together, than at the last minute, when my hands are often tied.

I can be reached almost anytime on my cell phone (202-210-9464) or via email ([gjustice@jmail.umd.edu](mailto:gjustice@jmail.umd.edu)). We will use email a great deal to communicate about our class (though you *cannot* file your assignments this way). However, if you have something important to talk about, I recommend calling. Please don't send me email on something important and assume I got it. Call!

One more important point: it is your responsibility to make sure that I have the proper email address and phone number to reach you. Often, I'll communicate changes to the class schedule or clarifications to an assignment through these channels. I want you to get this information promptly, so make sure I have your latest contact information, and please inform me if you change it.

## ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES

There will be two major assignments – a midterm and a final – and a third, smaller assignment that determine your grade as follows:

Assignment = 10 percent

Midterm = 30 percent

Final = 60 percent

You will get detailed information well in advance about how you are to complete these assignments, what is expected and how they will be graded.

In general, all graded assignments for this class must be typed (double-spaced) and should contain your name, the date and the name of the assignment (for example, ``midterm'') on each page. They must be submitted in paper form on the day and time they are due. Electronic copies, including disks, USB drives or e-mail, will not be accepted in lieu of paper copies. Students who miss assignments will not receive credit for them – no excuses will be accepted.

In class assignments will generally not be graded, but they will *greatly* enhance your understanding of this very complex topic we are studying. Participation in these assignments is key to understanding the material. In fact, they are so important that some of these assignments may carry extra credit points (at my discretion, of course). In most cases, these exercises will not be repeated, so attendance is important.

In an effort to reflect the standards of a professional newsroom, the criteria for grading include:

- **Plagiarism and Fabrication.** Any story that includes fabricated or plagiarized material will result in an automatic F for the course and a recommendation of expulsion to the Office of Judicial Affairs.
- **Libel.** Any story that includes libelous material will result in an F for the story.
- **Accuracy.** Any factual errors in a story, including the misspelling of a person's name or incorrectly reporting a campaign finance number, will result in an F for the story.
- **Deadlines.** Any story that is submitted after the deadline (usually the beginning of class at 3 p.m.) will result in an F – *even if it is one minute late*. You must make your deadlines.
- **Spelling.** Misspelling a proper name will result in an F for the story. Other spelling errors will lower the grade on the story by one letter grade per misspelled word.
- **Numbers.** Reporting a verifiable campaign finance number – or any number – incorrectly will result in an F for the story.
- **Other.** Stories that have no factual errors and are submitted on time will be evaluated on the basis of grammar, AP style, structure, conciseness, readability, completeness and *how well they addressed the assignment*.

## DEADLINES

Because this course is designed to immerse students in the world of journalism, we will replicate the tight and unbending deadlines of a real newsroom. That means assignments must be on my desk promptly at the beginning of class at 3 a.m. Stories handed in one day, one hour or one minute late will receive an F. *There are no exceptions.*

## ACCURACY

Because accuracy is the most important aspect of journalism, we will adhere to rigid standards. Any factual error – including the misspelling of a proper name or a number reported incorrectly – will result in an F for the assignment.

## ATTENDANCE

As you probably know, there is no mandatory attendance policy at the University of Maryland. However, as noted in the "Attendance and Assessment" section of the university's Academic Requirements and Regulations policy, (see p. 36 of Undergraduate Catalog), "in some courses, attendance and in-class participation are ongoing requirements and an integral part of the work of the course."

Money in Politics is precisely such a course. Learning to report campaign finance and lobbying information correctly is a complicated endeavor. It requires explanation and, in many cases, practice. Attending class regularly is important.

In accordance with the college's policy, *there will be no excused absences or lateness for any reason*. There will be no assignments due on religious holidays identified by the university. Go to <http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/FacRes/teach/religious.html> for holiday listings.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Along with certain rights, students also have the responsibility to behave honorably in an academic environment. Academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Any abridgment of academic integrity standards will be referred directly to the dean and the university's Office of Judicial Affairs. Confirmation of such incidents can result in expulsion from the university. All students will be required to sign an academic integrity pledge at the beginning of the semester that will cover all assignments in the course. A copy of the pledge will be handed out.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with a specific disability (permanent or temporary, physical or learning) who need special accommodation during the semester should make an appointment to meet with the instructor.