Advocacy & Politics



Course Information
PSCI 4372
Advocacy & Politics

Fall 2026
Dr. John Daly

Faculty Contact Information

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Note: Please use only your University of Texas account to email Archer Center faculty.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the issues individuals face when placed in the role of persuading others to adopt an issue or idea in a political environment like Washington, D.C. You will learn ways of communicating ideas memorably and impactfully, techniques for building and maintaining a "brand" name that motivates people to listen to you, ways of building allies through narrative and networking, methods for framing issues so they are potentially adoptable (i.e., pre-selling), and ways to apply various theories of persuasion to political issues. The goal is for class participants to grasp concepts they will see and experience during their internship in Washington, D.C. This is not a class on social movements although we will allude to some throughout the semester. It is instead about specific tools and techniques people can use to change others' opinions about issues.

Student Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the course, you will be able to:

- Explain the role that advocacy plays in shaping politics and the political environment.
- Identify the primary tools used in building and maintaining a reputation in work environments.
- Develop skills that will allow you to build alliances with others when trying to influence policy.
- Frame issues in ways that make you more persuasive (i.e., pre-selling).
- Better influence others in work settings common to Washington, D.C.

Required Course Materials

- **Machiavelli, N., *The* Prince**: This book is a classic on influence, in press since 1523. It focuses on how power is effectively used and has applications in virtually any environment (e.g., foreign policy, office settings, mergers and acquisitions).

You will receive a hard copy of the book. Please consult the reading assignments in the calendar below and bring the book to those class sessions.

- **Daly, John, *Advocacy: Championing Ideas and Influencing Others***: This book offers a summary of the course materials with substantially more detail than what is presented in class. You will use it for your second paper.

Calendar of Classes and Assignments

All sessions take place in the large conference room at the Archer Center.

1-2: Course Introduction and Building Credibility	
Date and time	
Preparation	None

3-4: Building Credibility (cont'd)	
Date and time	
Preparation	None

Assignment 1
Paper 1 check-in meeting with Dr. Daly on Teams at your scheduled time. Team 1: 6:30 to 6:45 PM Team 2: 6:45 to 7 PM Team 3: 7 to 7:15 PM Team 4: 7:15 to 7:30 PM Team 5: 7:30 to 7:45 PM Team 6: 7:45 to 8 PM Team 7: 8 to 8:15 PM Team 8: 8:15 to 8 PM
Paper 1 due to Dr. Daly on Saturday, October 3 Please submit to daly@austin.utexas.edu.

5-6. Communicating Clearly	
Date and time	
Preparation	Read Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

7-8: Communicating Clearly & Partnering	
Date and time	
Preparation	Read Machiavelli's *The Prince.*

Assignment 2
Paper 2 due to Dr. Daly on Friday, October 30 Please submit to: daly@austin.utexas.edu.

9-10: Partnering & Pre-Selling 1	
Date and time	
Preparation	Team presentations about lessons learned from paper, teams 1 to 4

11-14: Pre-selling 2; Persuasion; Persuasion theory and tactics	
Date and time	
Preparation	Team presentations about lessons learned from paper, teams 5 to 8

Assignment Instructions

Paper 1: Advocating for an Issue:

Format*:* There are two options for Paper 1. In either case, you will collaboratively write a team paper. There will be six people on each team*: Team 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8*. These team lists will be published in the Canvas page for this class, and a hard copy will be given to you.

Paper 1 is due **on Saturday, October 3.** It should not exceed 3000 words and must be in Word format (please, no PDFs). *Please submit your paper to daly@austin.utexas.edu*.

Option 1*:* Your team will identify an organization that is currently advocating for an issue in Washington, D.C. and then write a paper discussing the ways this organization is pitching or has pitched their idea. Your team selects one organization and its issue.

For instance, teams in the past have looked at:

- organizations advocating for statehood for D.C.
- the legalization of marijuana
- LGBTQ+ marriage
- funding Ukraine
- Congressional representation for D.C.
- improving eating behavior by Americans
- housing policy
- the DREAM Act.

You should plan to interview people involved in the marketing of the idea as well as people who are decision-makers about the issue. Suppose that you are focused on an advocacy organization trying to get Congress to provide better dental care for older Americans. You would want to chat with the people in the organization who are pitching this idea to Congress as well as, perhaps, staff members on relevant committees who might be deciding whether to create or pass this legislation. You might consider interviewing coalition partners (e.g., AARP) as well as members of the media who cover dental issue or older people in America.

Option 2*:* Your second option is to pick a very specific issue from the recent past that was successfully or unsuccessfully "sold" in DC.

For this option, you will interview people who have expertise on the political advocacy involved. Critically, this is not a simple history paper. It is a focused paper on the politics behind getting the issue adopted or rejected. One other thing: For this paper, you cannot select an issue that is being currently debated in DC. It needs to be one where there has been some resolution.

For example:

- How did USMCA get passed (probably too broad) and signed into law?
- How were attempts to have a female on the $20 bill delayed during the Trump Administration (more specific)?
- How did the DC area get the big Amazon deal (more specific)?
- How did Biden's Administration negotiate the CHIPS and Science Act (maybe too broad)?
- How did the Trump Administration successfully change the leadership at some Ivy campuses?
- How was "warp-speed" for the vaccine sold within the Trump Administration (more specific)?
- How was the "don't ask, don't tell" rule eliminated during the Obama Administration?

Goals*:* In both Paper 1 (as in Paper 2) you have two goals:

1. The first is to identify **very specific tactics** people use to influence.

   For instance, for this paper you may encounter a person who says that one needs to build alliances with other advocacy organizations. How does the organization actually do this? Meetings? Phone calls? And, then, what specific moves does the person make at the meeting or on the phone? For instance, at a meeting a person might decide, ahead of time, what they can give on and what they can't. On the phone, they might remind the other person about a recent social event. Or they might ask their advice on the issue rather than pushing the issue directly. Or, the organization might use X (formerly Twitter) as a way to communicate with their supporters. But how do they compose tweets to get people's attention? How do they know their tweets are successful? (Perhaps, for example, by measuring the percentage of tweets that are re-tweeted.)

2. The second is to **integrate your interviews and research**.

   You should not submit a paper that simply contains summaries of the interviews and research. Instead, you should seek out themes that cut across interviews and then embed specific interview items within those themes. So, for instance, you might say that one theme was the use of social media. Then you would describe how the different media is used – again with specifics.

Timeline*:* To successfully complete this paper, your team must follow this timeline.

On Thursday, September 17, please be prepared to provide an update on your work during your group's scheduled meeting with Dr. Daly on Teams.

By Saturday, October 3, submit your completed paper by email to Dr. Daly.

Paper 2: How do people successfully influence and persuade in DC?

Format: Your task is to interview six people about their advocacy techniques and then write an integrative summary of what you learned from those interviews.

In this paper you should integrate materials from the *Advocacy* book. A good paper will connect what you learned in your interviews to the materials in the book. You should plan to include materials from at least seven chapters.

It is due **on Friday, October 30**. Paper 2 should not exceed 3000 words and must be in Word format (please, no PDFs). *Please submit your paper to* daly@austin.utexas.edu.

Please plan on conducting a short (about 15 minute) presentation on your final paper at the last class sessions.

Goal: The goal for this paper is to discover some secrets of successful influence. The first paper deals with organizational influence, the second deals with personal influence.

Just like the previous paper, the goal is to be very specific about the moves people make to influence. So, when someone tells you the secret is to be trustworthy, what specific actions does that person do to build trust? Be on time for meetings? Follow-up immediately?

Like the prior paper, integration is crucial. A mediocre paper would simply include summaries of the interviews one after another. An excellent paper would seek out themes and then integrate the results of various interviews into those themes. So, for example, you might find one theme would be trust. Then you would include examples from various interviews about how trust is exemplified.

Late Assignments

Contact the professor to request any accommodations or additional time to complete the assignment.

Grading Policy

The total points earned out of 100 will determine your final grade.

Total points	Requirement
20	*Involvement in class*: Regular participation in class discussions. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the material. Decorum and professionalism are expected in the classroom at all times. Respect for the professor, your classmates and their opinions, guest speakers and their opinions, and Archer Center staff are also required. The professor reserves the right to deduct points from class involvement should any improprieties occur throughout the course of the semester.
80	*Papers*: Each paper will be worth 40 points total.

Class Absence: In some cases, you will opt to not attend a class session because of other commitments they have made. You should chat with me prior to the missed class(es). In most cases, you will be asked to complete a make-up assignment. Typically, the assignment is to read a book relevant to the class and write a paper describing applications of the book to their internship experience. This semester the book will be *Influence* by Robert Cialdini.