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## Course teaches campaign management

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University students have a unique opportunity to learn what it takes to run a political campaign and could be hired by the state Democratic or Republican parties to help manage a state legislative campaign.

Political Campaigns is a 300-level course that gives students campaign management know-how, including everything from researching a candidate's opponent to fund raising and working with the media.

"The class is meant to be practical and focus on the management side of campaigns. Students want to know about campaigns and how they work," said Professor John Klemanski. "Some students may have a long-term goal of being candidates themselves after finishing up a law degree. Some are considering job prospects such as government or staff jobs in addition to campaign jobs."

OU junior and political science major Michael Brown doesn't know if he will ever run for political office, but he would like to work for a campaign.

"This class gives me the opportunity to see what it takes for a campaign to come together," Brown said. "I'm not sure if I'd like to run for an office some day, but I'm interested in working for a statehouse campaign. We also have a lot of good guest speakers, which is a good incentive to draw people in to the class and learn."

Klemanski supplements the traditional textbook/lecture format with guest speakers who share their political expertise and experiences. Some of the scheduled speakers for the winter semester are Mark Brewer, chair of the Michigan Democratic Party; State Rep. John Pappageorge, a Republican from the 41st district; and Tom Wright, an OU alumnus who helped manage Willie Payne's successful race for mayor of Pontiac after graduating from Klemanski's class.

"We are fortunate to have an excellent group of guest speakers, which also presents networking opportunities. So the class is a blend of theory and practice, grounded in real-life experiences from the guest speakers and our 'how-to' textbook," said Klemanski, who worked as a consultant for Judge Leo Bowman in his 2000 campaign for chief judge for the 50th District Court in Pontiac.

One of the guest speakers said the combination of theory and practice the course offers is one he wished had been available to him as a college student.

"I was a political science major, but when I entered this field I had to learn on the fly," Brewer said. "There's a real need for this kind of class. Other classes have been highly theoretical, but not practically oriented. This particular course follows a great concept. We cannot guarantee jobs to all who apply, but we will do the best we can."

Klemanski developed the course in 1996 after having a conversation with OU alumnus Alan Mann, who is the director of polling for the Michigan House Republican Caucus.

"Mann's point was that there are up to 220 total state house seats up during every election period, but not many veteran campaign managers. There's more demand than supply, which remains a problem for candidates," Klemanski said. "We began offering the course for the winter semester so students have the chance to apply for management positions with the state parties before the May filing deadline for candidates. The arrangements with the parties are paid, and if a student does a good job, there's a chance to be hired again or be offered a legislative aid job or other staff position."

Sharon LeDuc, a graduate student in counseling, will be helping her husband run his judicial campaign this fall. She said Klemanski's course has been helpful to her during the pre-planning stages of her husband's campaign.

"I want to understand a lot of the nuts and bolts of running a political campaign, and the class provides a lot of hands-on information," LeDuc said. "With my husband running a judicial campaign for the fall 2002 election, the timing couldn't have been better."

When the class was last offered in the winter 2000 semester, 47 students enrolled. There are 38 students enrolled this semester, with four teleconferencing from Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City and Calvin College in Grand Rapids. Due to the high demand for the class, Klemanski said the course also may be offered next winter.

"If we offer the course next winter, we can tie it into local election campaigns," Klemanski said. "A lot of people feel closer to local politics than state politics. There's a lot of pent-up demand that we might be able to help meet if we offer the course on a yearly basis."

For more information on the program, contact John Klemanski at (248) 370-2355 or [klemansk@oakland.edu](mailto:klemansk@oakland.edu).

**SUMMARY**

OU students have a unique opportunity to learn what it takes to run a political campaign and could be hired by the state Democratic or Republican parties to help manage a state legislative campaign. Political Campaigns is a 300-level course that gives students campaign management know-how, including everything from researching a candidate's opponent to fund raising and working with the media.

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