

**APPLICATION FOR MAJOR  
Individualized Major Program  
Binghamton University  
Harpur College**

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**Faculty Sponsor:** Prof. Speaker

**Proposed Title:** Political Communications

**Brief Description of major:** A Political Communications major will encompass the three fields of interest that I am planning on utilizing to work in the field of political writing after graduation. The interdisciplinary major will include courses from the History, English (Rhetoric courses), and Political Science departments, as well as spending a semester studying and interning in the SUNY Brockport Washington Seminar Program.

**Signature:** Sam I. Am

## **Individualized Major Program Political Communications Major**

My interest in writing speeches and writing about politics developed during my four years in high school. I was a member of the debate team, and after my first three months as a Junior Varsity debater, I was moved up to Varsity debate, as a freshman. I found that doing the research, writing the speeches, and persuading the judge and opposing team brought such a rush of adrenaline every time it occurred, four times at each Varsity debate—and I loved every minute of it. Debate was about two different things—writing persuasive speeches and having the capability to think on the spot. It was something that I was able to learn how to do and succeed at throughout the three and a half years that I debated during high school.

However, I can date my interest in politics back to before my history as a high school Varsity debater. “Daddy, I want to do that when I grow up,” I remember telling my father one day. He was bouncing me on his knee during former President Bill Clinton’s first inaugural address in 1992. I was immersed in the television programming for that night—the decorations, the press, the speeches—the event captivated me in a way that I had not experienced before. Then, I meant that I wanted to be the first Female Jewish President of the United States of America one day, a practical dream for a five year old. Although I have grown up since then and no longer dream of being the President of the United States of America, there is something about politics that is still extremely captivating, and causes me to want to work as a speechwriter or a political analyst when I graduate from college.

During my junior year of high school, I took a year of American politics, and one of the assignments during November of that year was to work on a local political campaign. I decided to work on the election for governor of New Jersey at the Democratic headquarters in my county. I made phone calls to registered democrats in the area, hung up flyers, and canvassed around local communities. I found that talking to residents about the upcoming election and informing them about the issues at hand was something that I was interested in. For that class, we also composed an issue of the school newspaper dedicated to the elections that were occurring. My class wrote all of the articles and completed the layout of the newspaper on galley sheets during the course. I found that doing the research and interviewing the candidates for the articles was something I also enjoyed greatly. I had been writing for school newspapers since the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and it was the first time that I had found something really challenging and interesting to write, and I enjoyed it immensely.

When I came to Binghamton University, I had made a plan for my four years of college. I was going to major in English with a concentration in Rhetoric and after graduating, become a print journalist. During my first semester, I took General Education classes and wrote as a staff writer for Pipe Dream, as well as helped with the voter registration drive that the New York Public Interest Research Group was conducting. During my second semester, I took more General Education courses, but found myself involved in the Student Association and writing for Binghamton Review, the conservative student journal on campus. I became extremely involved in writing about the politics of student groups on

campus, as well as other political issues, while acting as a representative from my dorm on the student governing body for the campus.

As my second semester at BU came to an end, I found myself in the office of the English department, declaring my major, just as I had planned before entering the University. Being an English major, there are required courses that must be taken, and for the fall semester of 2005, I registered for Introduction to Journalism, Modern American Fiction, The Holocaust, and British Literature 1. After doing some thinking about what I wanted to do after I graduate from BU, I realized that my career pursuits could benefit from reading different types of literature, but could not benefit from just solely reading. The requirements for English majors are courses that involve mainly reading classic and modern literature, but nothing beyond that. I realized that my career pursuits had changed from what I planned before high school, and while I wanted to go into a similar field, I needed to major in something that would provide an in depth education in numerous areas, not solely in literature.

I spoke to a friend who attends George Washington University in Washington D.C. and told him about my problem deciding my major. He told me about an undergraduate program at GWU called political communications, and after looking at its curriculum, I realized that was what I wanted to major in. Just from reading the title of the major, I knew that it was exactly I want my future career to involve-- communicating about politics. In my eyes, political communications covers every aspect that I am interested in—history of the United States, politics, and journalism. However, Binghamton University does not

have an interdisciplinary major that covers all three of those areas, but it does have the Individualized Major Program.

Therefore, I think that I could benefit immensely from creating my own major, a Political Communications major. For this major, I would take specific rhetoric courses that would provide a solid background in writing in both journalistic style as well as an academic style, while also learning about issues in the media and rhetoric, and learning how to incorporate writing and speaking together effectively. I would take American history courses to learn about the foundations of America as well as modern American history. Therefore, these history courses would be covering the foundations of America to refresh my memory, as well as courses covering from the years leading up to World War I until the present day. Those courses would be beneficial to my career plans because to work in American politics, one needs to have a well rounded knowledge of American history to fully understand the present day issues.

Lastly, I would take a selection of political science courses. The courses would cover the history and evolution of American politics and ideas, as well as teach about campaign strategies, political discourse, political parties, and others. These courses would provide an intense education on the foundations and evolution of politics up to modern day ideals and practices. I feel that courses in political science would be beneficial to learning how to be an effective political writer, because it would provide an education from all different facets that create what being a political icon or a political writer involves.

Along with the history, political science, and rhetoric courses, I also am planning on spending a semester in Washington D.C. with the SUNY Brockport program. From this program, I will spend a semester with an internship on national politics, which writing a research paper on national politics and attending a semester long seminar on it as well. I feel that this opportunity would be extremely beneficial for this major because it would give me hands on experience working in politics, as well as writing about politics.

I have been able to trace a sense of political ambition from when I was five, and that feeling has stayed strong in my life. Having a slight idea of the career path I want to take after graduating has given me a sense of what would be the most beneficial subject for me to major in, and that is political communications. I feel that this major, as an interdisciplinary major, is the most beneficial path I can embark on towards gaining a well rounded education in a field that I plan to pursue in the future.

**Individualized Major Program  
Political Communications Major  
Course List**

**RHET 344: Writing and Speaking**

**RHET 350: Rhetorical Foundations**

**RHET 440A: Opinion Writing**

**RHET 441: Newspaper Editing**

**RHET 450: Topics in Rhetoric (one of the following):**

1 **450A: Communication, Ethics, and Social Action**

2 **450H: Human Rights Discourse**

3 **450R: Political Discourse**

**HIST 255: United States in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 1919-1945**

**HIST 256: Recent and Contemporary USA, 1945- Present**

**HIST 353: Society and Thought in Modern America**

**PLSC 322: American Political Parties and Pressure Groups**

**PLSC 324: Campaigns and Elections**

**PLSC 326: American State Politics**

**Integrative Project**

**Washington Semester Program**

**PLSC 491: Internship on National Politics**

**PLSC 496: Research Paper on National Politics**

**PLSC 497: Seminar on National Politics**

**Individualized Major Program  
Political Communications Major  
Annotated Course List**

**RHET 344: Writing and Speaking**

*This course is important because in order to write successful speeches, one needs to be able to incorporate writing and speaking together. A speech must be well written, but also written in a way in which it can be delivered effectively, and I feel that this course will teach how to do so.*

**RHET 350: Rhetorical Foundations**

*This course is imperative because it explains the basics of language and how to use it persuasively. Therefore, this course would provide the basic training of writing and speaking effectively, which are two aspects that need to work together effectively.*

**RHET 440A: Opinion Writing**

*Speeches are based on opinions many times, as are some news columns. As a political analyst, one must be able to analyze events and form opinions and write them in a persuasive fashion, just as speeches should be written. Also, opinion writing is often times used in election/campaign speeches, which is also related to the fields of interest. I feel that this course will effectively show how to use opinions to form effective pieces of writings, without sounding uninformed or overly biased.*

**RHET 441: Newspaper Editing**

*If one is going to work in any communications field, they need to be able to write coherently and be able to correct their writing, as well as others. I feel that this course will provide in depth training in editing newspaper writing, which can then be used to apply to all forms of writing in the future. This course is specifically directed at learning those editing skills, and therefore would be important for training to work as a writer.*

**RHET 450: Topics in Rhetoric (one of the following):**

**3 450A: Communication, Ethics, and Social Action**

*This course is one of interest because social action relates directly to the field of politics and communication and ethics are huge issues that deal directly not only with politics, but journalism as well.*

**4 450H: Human Rights Discourse**

*Working in politics, human rights is often a huge issue of discussion and interest among politicians and writers. I feel that this course would both educate me on human rights issues that are ongoing and help to formulate stances on the issues, but also teach how to effectively write and communicate about them.*

## **5 450R: Political Discourse**

*This course examines current political issues in depth and teaches how to write effectively about them. I feel that this course is extremely important because it would help to further my capabilities to write about politics and political issues from an academic standpoint.*

### **HIST 255: United States in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 1919-1945**

*History of World War I and World War II is extremely important to know in American history because the two great wars affected the shaping on American government immensely. I feel that this course is important because it provides details of the Presidencies as well as wars and how they were dealt with governmentally, as well as how it was dealt with as a country as a whole.*

### **HIST 256: Recent and Contemporary USA, 1945- Present**

*From 1945 to the present, America has shaped as a country in numerous ways and the changes have turned the government into what it is today. I feel that this course is extremely important to take because working in present-day America, it is important to know how the government was shaped into its current status, and I feel this course will teach that.*

### **HIST 353: Society and Thought in Modern America**

*I feel that this course will explain thoroughly many of the ongoing issues that are prevalent in society currently, both politically and nationally. I feel that wanting to work in politics, one needs to be aware of every possible opinion on every issue that is apparent in society, and I feel that this course will provide that background information that would educate me on all classes of thought on all issues.*

### **PLSC 322: American Political Parties and Pressure Groups**

*This course is important for a Political Communications major because it goes in depth into every American political group that has existed and explains how each formed into what they currently are and explains each groups platforms, which is important to know and understand when working in modern politics.*

### **PLSC 324: Campaigns and Elections**

*Speechwriting is pertinent to campaigning and partaking in successful and persuasive elections. However, being able to write persuasive speeches or effective articles is only possible if one has a complete understanding of campaigning and how elections are run. Therefore, I feel this class is important because campaigns and elections are often the basis for many pieces of political writing, and I feel that this class will properly educate and inform me about the history of campaigning and elections, up to present day procedures.*

### **PLSC 326: American State Politics**

*Nationally, the government holds the highest political pull, however politicians should be aware of the state politics that occur as well. Therefore, I think that to*

*hold a career in politics, whether it be writing about it as an analyst or being a speechwriter, one should be educated about even the smallest government procedures, which are formulated differently in every state. I think that this course would be very beneficial because it would teach about political procedures in American states, which is not something that many people are educated about traditionally.*

### **Integrative Project**

#### **Washington Semester Program:**

*From spending a semester in Washington D.C., I think I will be able to gain hands on experience in the one place where politics is the prevalent profession. While in Washington D.C., I will be placed into an internship hopefully working with speechwriting, while also spending a semester doing research on the link between media and elections, as well as attending a seminar on national politics. I feel that this will be beneficial because it will give me experience working in political communications, while in the middle of where all national political ideas and practices occur.*