GU POLITICS FELLOW ANTONIA FERRIER
Discussion Group Outline

Learning to Love the Noise: How to Survive and Thrive in the Modern Era of Politics

**Week 1 — An overview of the noise in politics today**
There’s never been more means of communicating in politics than today: the traditional news media – state and local newspapers, cable television, network television, wire services, and the big daily newspapers TO social media – Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram. How do you decide what to listen to? And what influences you?

**Week 2 — Do voters hear the noise?**
The 2016 election was not predicted by the political class in Washington, DC. With the conventional wisdom being so wrong with the election of Donald Trump, how do we actually know what voters care about or how they’ll vote? And who actually votes anyway? This session will look at what different subsets of voters listen to and why.

**Week 3 — Twitter in the Trump era**
Social media is a means of directly engaging voters without the filter of the mainstream media. How does this work? How does it impact voters and the news itself? And what if the information on social media is wrong?

**Week 4 — #FakeNews!**
What is traditional media in the era modern politics? There are more credentialed reporters covering Capitol Hill than ever before yet state and local media is dying. The news is more homogeneous and increasingly driven by clicks on stories. How do reporters make news, break news and decide what is news today? How do they handle juggling so much news condensed into shorter news cycles? How do they maintain impartiality – can they – when they are increasingly both reporters, television analysts and twitter stars?

**Week 5 — It’s all about the BASE!**
Partisans and partisanship are dirty words in politics, but should they be? If both political parties rely on their base voters to get them elected, how do partisan – or base – interest groups work to influence the direction of their respective parties? How does partisan media from Rachel Maddow to Sean Hannity shape and define what is or isn’t a priority to the left and the right? And is being a partisan a BAD thing?
Week 6 — The ever shrinking center? Politics is increasingly tribal.
Party identification has become a virtual religion and a means of self-identification that defines people like never before. With that being true, what happens to the center? Are those self-identified independents heard in politics today? And how does Washington compromise if the center continues to shrink?

Week 7 — Breaking through
Increasing partisanship, more noise, more means of communicating – and yet laws are passed that impact people’s lives. But if no one is listening – or if policy makers can’t get their message out – does it matter? This session will be a look at how to break through.

Week 8 — Focus, focus, focus
The final week will be a retrospective on the previous weeks and a look at how the most successful politicians use focus and determination through policy and communications to achieve wins that registers with voters and their constituents.