GU POLITICS FELLOW NADEAM ELSHAMI

DISCUSSION GROUP OUTLINE


ACCOMPLISHING YOUR GOALS IN WASHINGTON AGAINST THE ODDS

Discussion Group Synopsis

Last year’s presidential election has taught us that political precedent and historical trends will be rewritten before our eyes. In today’s Washington, a party that is in the deep minority has more power than ever expected; a President is continuing to capture and drive all news cycles on a daily and sometime hourly basis; voters are fascinated with social media, unwittingly or uncaringly joining in the Russian Government attempt to weaken our democracy; and scandals that would have destroyed the career of any politician are cast aside.

Is it possible to pass a budget without funding the border wall and can the Dreamers be protected? Can Republicans achieve their goal of tax reform? Will the Affordable Care Act survive? Will the news media, in all its forms, ever regain its traditional role in American politics? Those, and many more, are the questions asked and at times answered.

Welcome to the Art of the Impossible in the Age of the New Abnormal: How to accomplish your goals in Washington against the odds.

Week 1 – Overview – How Washington Really Works

There are too many variables to how the levers of government operate. Congress and the White House play their part, but sixty Senators, in most cases, decide what becomes law. Yet, a minority party in the House gets to decide if those Senators will be able to wield that power.

Week 2 – The Role of the Media in Shaping Washington’s Unending News Cycles
Is the competition to report first on a presidential tweet that blames the “fake news” for the negative coverage about the Trump Administration necessary and is that contributing to the a new “abnormal.”

**Week 3 – Case Study: Dreamers, Trump, the Wall and GOP Recent History on Immigration**

In a span of four years, the prospect of passing into law bipartisan immigration reform has given way to a fight to save the Dreamers, prevent the building of a border wall, protect refugees and immigrants, and the forming of unlikely coalitions on both sides of the issue.

**Week 4 – Case Study: Funding the Federal Government to Stop a Shutdown, Preventing America from Defaulting on its Debts**

Congress must fund the government and the nation must pay its debts. Using those necessary and mandatory duties to gain or prevent leverage is the name of the current political game for both sides.

**Week 5 – Case Study: Tax Reform Victory or Defeat for GOP**

**Week 6 – Case Study: Defeating Affordable Care Act Repeal**

Repealing Obamacare has been the mantra of every Republican since the passage of the law in 2010. By surviving the repeal through united opposition, relentless media campaign, and organized grassroot forces, some may claim the impossible has been achieved. Not yet because the challenge remains to fund the law and ensure the sabotage of the ACA fails.

**Week 7 – Case Study: Trump at the Negotiating Table – a Battle with the GOP, his Allies and his Aides**

History has taught us that a President’s word is iron clad. History is now teaching us that it depends on who the president is.

**Week 8 – Now that You Know How Washington Really Works, How Should It Work Instead**