

PSC 2229
Media and Politics
Summer Session 1 2017
T, Th 6:10 – 8:40
PHIL 348

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Course Overview and Goals

The media plays an important role in American democracy, so important that it is often referred to as the “fourth branch” of government. Even in the earliest days of our republic the importance of the mass media was recognized as crucial to any democratic society, and thus was provided with an honored position. In fact, the most important document in our nation’s history, the Constitution, and its ratification was debated via early mass media - the newspapers. Ever since then the media have played an enduring role in our political landscape through serving as agents of partisan warfare, the tools of reformers in the early 20th century, and providing the masses with information about their government and current events. Thus, it is virtually impossible to fully understand American politics without understanding the media and the role it plays in our society.

This course investigates the role that the media plays in our society and politics. It focuses on several broad themes important to understanding the media and the role it plays in our politics: the centrality of the media to American politics; the growth and development of the American media system and the changes to media taking place today; the media’s coverage of specific policy issues; the process of newsmaking; the effects on public opinion and voting behavior; the structure of the American media system; and the American media system in a comparative context. Class discussions and readings will be devoted to scholarship in economics, political science, and communication that elucidate these key themes about the media.

In the end, the course has four goals:

- To help you understand the role of the mass media system in American politics, the development and structure of the American mass media system, and how the development and structure of the mass media shape its role in American politics
- To help you understand how the interaction among journalists, politicians, and citizens shapes contemporary American politics
- To help you learn how social scientists ask and answer interesting questions about politics
- To help you become a savvy consumer of political news and current events, both in this class and beyond.

Readings

Most readings will be from scholarly works and will be posted on blackboard prior to class or there will be a citation to the reading in the syllabus. It is your responsibility to obtain the readings listed for the class period if they are not posted on blackboard. It might be worthwhile for you to download and, if you prefer printed versions as I do, print all of the readings at the beginning of the semester so that you don't have to do it for every class or week.

There is one book assigned for the class. It is available at the GW Bookstore:

Uscinski, Joseph. 2004. *The People's News*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

It should not be surprising that in addition to the readings assigned each week that in a political science course, and one on the role of the media in the American political system at that, it is expected that you will keep up with the daily news. Reading a newspaper is the best way to do this. If you are not one to read the newspaper there are many other good alternatives (I, for example, prefer to listen to NPR as my main source of the day's news). The one caveat is that your chosen news source must have frequent coverage of national politics and the news itself cannot be major social media sites that start with F or T. Our discussions will frequently touch on current events, often as a way to illustrate concepts from lecture or readings. Regularly consuming the news will not only bring course material to life, but it will also make the class more interesting.

Evaluation

Your grade will be determined based on the following (weights in parentheses):

- 10 Quizzes (50%; worth 5% each)
- Short Paper (15%)
- Final Exam (20%)
- Discussion Questions (15%; each time you submit questions is worth 7.5%)

Quizzes – The quizzes in this class serve two purposes. First, to reward you for class attendance – thus there will be a quiz every day of class except for the first and last day. Attendance at class is crucial both for your own learning and for the fostering of a rich and beneficial classroom environment. Thus, quizzes will be used to take attendance. To that end, showing up and attempting the quiz will account for 50% of your quiz grade for each class session. That is, if you show up, write your name on the quiz, and proceed to get every question wrong, you will still get a 50% on the quiz. The second purpose of the quiz is to test your reading, comprehension, and understanding of the material. Quizzes will consist of 5 questions, with each question worth 10 points. If you get three questions correct, for example, you will receive an 80 for that quiz. The quizzes will not be particularly difficult, but you will do well only if you keep up with the reading assignments.

I will drop your lowest quiz grade and count your highest quiz grade twice in calculating your final grade. Giving you a total of 10 quiz grades from which your final quiz grade

will be calculated. Because of this, you may not make up a quiz if you miss class on that day.

Paper – You will be required to write a short (3-4 pages) paper in response to a writing assignment that will be handed out on June 6th. You will have one and a half weeks to complete the writing assignment and it will be due on June 20th, in class.

Final Exam – There will be an in-class final exam on the last class, June 29th. More information will be made about the exam as we get closer to the final date.

Discussion Questions – This class will be taught as a hybrid lecture-seminar format. Thus, the second part of class each class session will be devoted to a discussion of the readings. Twice during the semester you will be required to write and then circulate discussion questions based on the readings to your peers. In addition, you will be partially responsible (along with your other classmates who have written discussion questions) for leading class discussions on the weeks that you have written questions. Questions must be circulated by noon on the day of each class you are assigned to circulate questions. You will be graded on both your timely submission of questions to the class and your assistance in leading discussion on the days you are assigned to write questions.

At the end of the semester your final grade will be calculated using your grades on each of the assignments above and their respective weights, and you will receive a letter grade based on the following grading scale:

A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D (60-69), and F (0-59).

Here are some final notes about grading in the class:

- If you have questions about the grade you received on an assignment please come see me during office hours or send me an e-mail to schedule an appointment to meet in person. I do not discuss grades over e-mail, but am more than happy to sit down with you in person and help you understand why you received the grade you did and help you get the grade you wish next time.
- If you do not believe that the grade you received is not indicative of your work I will regrade your assignment for you. You must contact me in writing, sending a memo about why you believe you did not deserve the grade that you received. You must contact me within one week of receiving back your work, if you do not you waive the right for me to reconsider your grade for that assignment. Once I receive your petition in writing I will regrade your work, and the resulting grade, whether higher or lower than your original, will be your final grade for that assignment.
- Late assignments will be penalized by 5-points per business-day that it is late (Monday through Friday).
- The only acceptable excuses for not completing an assignment on time are illness or family emergency. If either circumstance arises, I will give you extra time, but

- only if you (1) communicate with me before the assignment is due, and (2) provide documentation of the circumstance. After that is completed we will discuss a new due date.
- If you fail to complete an assignment you will receive a 0 for that assignment.
 - There is no extra credit

Religious Observances

If an exam or assignment is scheduled for a date when you are observing a religious holy day, I will work with you to find an acceptable alternative time to complete the assignment. Please check the syllabus and let me know during the first week of classes if we will need to do so.

Scholastic Dishonesty and Academic Integrity

Please don't cheat. Seriously, don't do it. It's not worth it and will be a big headache for both of us. It's really just easier to do the work. All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work and I support this goal. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as "cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

University Counseling Center (UCC) 202-994-5300

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
 - confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
- <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>

Academic Freedom

Each student is strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions. In any classroom situation that involves discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may not only disagree with

each other at times, but the students and instructor may also find that they have disparate views on sensitive and volatile topics. It is my hope that these differences will enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where all of us will be encouraged to think and learn from each other. Therefore, be assured that students' grades will not be affected by any beliefs or ideas expressed in class or in assignments. Rather, we will all respect the views of others when expressed in classroom discussions.

In Case of An Emergency

If we experience an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave the classroom, we will meet in front of Bell Hall on G Street to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

Technology

Technology's great. It has made us more efficient as a people and has provided humankind with more ability and power than we've ever had before. But, the fact is that laptops, smart phones, and other electronic devices are a distraction to your classmates and to me. Not only that, but research has shown that we learn more when we take notes by hand:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>

Thus, you may not use electronic devices in class. If you have a unique reason for needing a laptop to take notes, please contact me and we can make accommodations as necessary.

Course Schedule

(Note: This is subject to change at the will of the instructor as the semester progresses)

Part I: The Media in the Contemporary Political Landscape

May 23rd: Introduction and the Contemporary Media Landscape

- Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. New York: Free Press. Chapter 1 ("The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads").
- Hayes, Danny. 2013. "Obama Is Wrong. Traditional Journalism Isn't Dead." *Washington Post*, Wonkblog. August 4. Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/08/04/obama-is-wrong-traditional-journalism-isnt-dead/>
- Mitchell, Amy, Jeffrey Gottfried, Michael Barthel, and Elisa Shearer. 2016. "How Americans Get Their News." *Pew Research Center*. July 7. Available at: <http://www.journalism.org/2016/07/07/pathways-to-news/>

May 25th: Media in Comparative and Historical Perspective

(Make sure to read the assigned readings from May 23rd if you haven't yet, most importantly the Lippmann reading)

- Hallin, Daniel C. and Robert Giles. 2005. "Presses and Democracies." In Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (eds.), *The Press*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 4-16.
- Schudson, Michael. 2003. *The Sociology of News*. New York: W.W. Norton. Chapter 4 ("Where News Came From: The History of Journalism"), pp. 64-89.
- Petrova, Maria. 2011. "Newspapers and Parties: How Advertising Revenues Created an Independent Press." *American Political Science Review* 105(4): 790-808.

Part II: The Newsmaking Process

May 30th: Freedom of the Press and The News as a Business Pt. 1

- Sanford, Bruce W. and Jane E. Kirtley. 2005. "The First Amendment Tradition and Its Critics." In Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (eds.), *The Press*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 263-276.
- Risen, James. 2016. "If Donald Trump Targets Journalists, Thank Obama." *New York Times*, December 30. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/30/opinion/sunday/if-donald-trump-targets-journalists-thank-obama.html? r=2>
- Hamilton, James T. 2004. *All the News That's Fit to Sell*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 6
- Uscinski, Joseph. 2014. *The People's News*. New York: New York University Press. Chapter 1.

June 1st: The News as a Business Pt. 2 (Economic Forces and the Modern Landscape)

- Uscinski, Joseph. 2014. *The People's News*. New York: New York University Press. Chapters 2, 3, 4

June 6th: Values, Norms, News Routines, and Media Bias

- Bennett, W. Lance. 1996. "An Introduction to Journalism Norms and Representations of Politics." *Political Communication*, 13 (4): 373 – 384.
- Wolfsfeld, Gadi. 2011. *Making Sense of Media and Politics: Five Principles in Political Communication*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 3 ("No Such Thing as

Objective News”), pp. 47-71.

- Niven, David. 2002. *Tilt! The Search for Media Bias*. Westport, Conn: Praeger. Chapter 3 (“The Jury is Still Out: Academic Evidence on Media Bias”), pp. 51-71.
- Hayes, Danny. 2014. “The News Anew? Political Coverage in a Transformed Media Age.” In Travis N. Ridout (ed.), *New Directions in Media and Politics*, pp. 193-209. New York: Routledge.

Part III: News Coverage of Policy Debates and Elections

June 8th: Policy Debates; War and Foreign Policy

- Bosso, Christopher. 1989. “Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and the Discovery of Famine in Ethiopia.” In Michael Margolis and Gary A. Mauser (eds.), *Manipulating Public Opinion: Essays on Public Opinion as a Dependent Variable*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing. Ppg. 153-174.
- Bell, Carole V. and Robert M. Entman. 2011. “The Media’s Role in America’s Exceptional Politics of Inequality: Framing the Bush Tax Cuts of 2001 and 2003.” *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 16(4): 548 – 572.
- Lawrence, Regina G. 2000. “Game-Framing the Issues: Tracking the Strategy Frame in Public Policy News.” *Political Communication* 17: 93-114.
- Hayes, Danny and Matt Guardino. 2011. “The Influence of Foreign Voices on U.S. Public Opinion,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 55 (4), 830-850.

June 13th: Coverage of Elections, Female Candidates, and the 2016 Election

- Patterson, Thomas E. 1994. *Out of Order*. New York: Vintage. Prologue and Chapter 1 (“Truth and Falsehood on the Campaign Trail,” “The Miscast Institution”), pp. 3-52.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Helmut Norpoth, and Kyu S. Hahn. 2004. “Consumer Demand for Election News: The Horse Race Sells.” *Journal of Politics* 66(1): 157-175.
- Kahn, Kim. 1994. “The Distorted Mirror: Press Coverage of Women Candidates for Statewide Office.” *Journal of Politics* 56(1): 154-173.
- Hayes, Danny and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2015. “A Non-Gendered Lens? Media, Voters, and Female Candidates in Contemporary Congressional Elections,” *Perspectives on Politics*. 13(1): 95-118
- Sides, John and Kaley Leetaru. 2016. “A Deep Dive Into the News Media’s Role in the Rise of Donald J. Trump.” *The Monkey Cage*, June 24. Available at:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/06/24/a-deep-dive-into-the-news-medias-role-in-the-rise-of-donald-j-trump/>

Part IV: The Media and the Public

June 15th: “The News and You” - How the Media Shapes Public Opinion & Behavior

- Prior, Markus. 2011. “Audience Fragmentation and Political Inequality in the Post-Broadcast Media Environment.” In Doris A. Graber (ed.), *Media Power in Politics*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. pp. 153-164.
- Baum, Matthew. 2010. "Soft News and Political Knowledge: Evidence of Absence or Absence of Evidence?" *Political Communication*, 20: 173-190
- Shaker, Lee. 2014. “Dead Newspapers and Citizens’ Civic Engagement.” *Political Communication* 31(1): 131-148.
- Iyengar, Shanto. 2011. *Media Politics: A Citizen’s Guide*, 2nd Edition. New York: Norton. Chapter 8 (“News and Public Opinion”), pp. 229-271.

June 20th: How the Media Shapes Public Opinion & Behavior cont.; social media

- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 6-28.
- Sides, John, and Lynn Vavreck. 2013. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*. Chapter 3 (“Random, or Romney?”), pp. 32-63.
- Herman, John. 2016. “Inside Facebook’s (Totally Insane, Unintentionally Gigantic, Hyperpartisan) Political-Media Machine.” *New York Times*, August 24. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/28/magazine/inside-facebooks-totally-insane-unintentionally-gigantic-hyperpartisan-political-media-machine.html>
- Curry, Kevin. 2016. "More and More People Get their News Via Social Media. Is that Good or Bad?" *The Monkey Cage*, September 30. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/30/more-and-more-people-get-their-news-via-social-media-is-that-good-or-bad/>
- Somaiya, Ravi. 2014. “How Facebook is Changing the Way Its Users Consume Journalism.” *The New York Times*, October 26. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/27/business/media/how-facebook-is-changing-the-way-its-users-consume-journalism.html>

Remember your Paper Assignment is Due

June 22nd: Are the Media Ruining Everything? Political Polarization, Democracy, and the Media

- Mutz, Diana C. and Byron Reeves. 2005. "The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust." *American Political Science Review* 99(1): 1-15.
- Ladd, Jonathan M. 2014. "The Era of Media Distrust and Its Consequences for Perceptions of Reality." In Travis N. Ridout (ed.), *New Directions in Media and Politics*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 24-44.
- Levendusky, Matt. 2013. *How Partisan Media Polarize America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4 ("Can Partisan Media Polarize?"), pp.66-93.
- Arceneaux, Kevin and Martin Johnson. 2013. *Changing Minds or Changing Channels? Partisan News in an Age of Choice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4 ("Partisan News and Mass Polarization"), pp. 70-90.
- Nyhan, Brendan. 2016. "Relatively Few Americans Live in Partisan Media Bubbles, but They're Influential." *The New York Times*, September 7. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/08/upshot/relatively-few-people-are-partisan-news-consumers-but-theyre-influential.html?_r=0

Part V: Wrapping it Up

June 27th: Where are we Now? Critical Perspectives on the Media, the Media and Our Democracy, and the Media Post-Election 2016.

- Entman, Robert. 1989. *Democracy without Citizens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1. pp. 3 - 29.
- Uscinski, Joseph. 2014. *The People's News*. New York: New York University Press. Chapter 5.
- Adorno, Theodor and Max Horkheimer. 1944. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*.
- Bell, Emily. 2017. "Donald Trump is a Media Organization," *Columbia Journalism Review*, January 10. Available at: https://www.cjr.org/tow_center/donald_trump_media_organization.php
- Folkenflik, David. 2016. "Weary Press Corps Can Celebrate Election's End, Then Survey the Wreckage." National Public Radio, November 8. Available at:

<http://www.npr.org/2016/11/08/501033242/weary-press-corps-can-celebrate-elections-end-then-survey-wreckage>

June 29th: Final Exam