

The Ohio State University

Department of Political Science

Political Science 509: Mass Media and American Politics

Spring 2010 (Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30am – 11:18am, Townshend XXX)

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Overview

Mass Media and American Politics introduces students to the state of the art in scholarly work on political communication and mass media and its application to contemporary American politics. The goals of the class are (1) to learn about how citizens and government officials make decisions when information is mediated through a variety of technology, and (2) to learn how to read, digest, and critique political science as it is produced today.

The course is conducted on a lecture and discussion basis. A typical class section begins with a discussion of current events motivated and driven by student participation, and then proceeds to a (short) lecture that addresses a theoretical approach, develops a conceptual tool, or presents some analysis of data. Class continues with a discussion of the merits and drawbacks of the approach, alternative means of addressing the relevant problem, suggestions about different data that might better answer relevant questions, etc. During each class period, students are required to contribute to discussion, either by questioning the professor or other students with an eye toward developing mutual understanding, developing arguments to illustrate germane discrepancies of opinion, or providing constructive critique.

Course Material

Media Politics, by Shanto Iyengar and Jennifer A. McGrady (IM).

Articles and chapters available on Carmen & on reserve

Requirements and grading

Grades will be assigned as a weighted average of (1) two review/response papers (10% each), (2) media consumption journal (25%), (3) class participation (10%), (3) group presentation (20%), and (3) final exam (25%).

Response papers. Every Thursday, students may hand in a short (2-3 page, single-sided, double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1" margin) paper discussing and critiquing one or more of the readings. Please do not summarize the readings in these response papers. Instead, critique, compare, or contrast the readings you choose, with the goal of identifying shortcomings and alternate interpretations. By the end of the quarter, students should turn in two of these papers.

No response papers will be accepted after the ninth week of the quarter.

Media consumption journal. At the beginning of each class, each student must submit an entry in a journal of the media he/she consumes. Each entry should record pieces of journalism the student reads/hears/watches, and include the source, the time and date, the subject matter, reaction, and how the piece fits (or doesn't fit) in with the class readings and discussions.

Class participation. This component will be based on contributions to class discussion. Absences must be excused in advance.

Group Presentation. Starting in the second week of class, small groups of 4-5 students will make brief presentations on the readings. Each presentation should present the ideas from that week (there is no need to provide an in-depth discussion of specifics from any of the readings) and expand on them in a creative way. An example of the latter for the session on the effects of in-your-face television would be if students searched the Internet for contrastive examples of in-your-face television and its opposite, televised discourse presented from a removed perspective, to illustrate the difference. It would be particularly helpful to find further details and context to aid consumption of that class session's material. Presentations should be about 10 to 15 minutes, and all members of the group should contribute and speak. One's grade will be determined in part by evaluation by other members. Furthermore each group will submit a study guide to the readings from that day. Study guides should be no more than one side of one page. **There will be no presentation in the final class session, or in session 15.**

Final Exam. The final exam will be essay format.

Course Policies

Given that much of the course is discussion-driven and each session will have significant class interaction, it is important that students attend class regularly. Absence from class (for whatever reason) prevents not only the absent student from learning from the class discussion but also the class from learning from the student's preparation and insights. Absences will affect not only collaborative learning, but also the assessment of the absent student's class participation grade. No late work will be accepted unless previously arranged with Prof. Minozzi. Such arrangements require well-substantiated and sound reasons and will result in progressively lowered grades depending on how late the work is finally produced.

I expect all of the work you do in this course to be your own. I will tolerate absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation). I will report any s of cheating or plagiarism to the university committee on academic misconduct, and they will be handled according to university policy.

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs, and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services, I encourage you to do so.

Course Outline

All numbered lines refer to class sessions. Readings are provisional, which means that as the quarter progresses, student interests may lead us in different directions and might alter some of the readings.

1. Tuesday, March 30, 2010. **Introduction.**
2. Thursday, April 1, 2010. **US Media in Comparison.**
IM Chs. 1 & 2.
3. Tuesday, April 6, 2010. **Media Ownership.**
(1) IM Ch. 3.
(2) Bagdikian, Ben H. 1997 (1985). "The U.S. Media: Supermarket or Assembly Line?"
Journal of Communication 35: 97-109.
4. Thursday, April 8, 2010. **The Objective News Standard.**
(1) IM Ch. 4.
(2) Schudson, Michael. 2007. "The Concept of Politics in Contemporary U.S. Journalism."
Political Communication 24: 131-142
5. Tuesday, April 13, 2010. **Competing News Standards.**
(1) Sunstein, Cass. 2008. "Neither Hayek nor Habermas" *Public Choice* 134: 87-95
(2) Zaller, John. 2003. "A New Standard for News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the
Monitorial Citizen." *Political Communication* 20:109-130
6. Thursday, April 15, 2010. **What Media Bias?**
Dalton, Russell, Paul A. Beck, and Robert Huckfeldt. 1998. "Partisan Cues and the Media:
Information Flows in the 1992 Presidential Election." *American Political Science Review*
92(1): 111-126.
7. Tuesday, April 20, 2010. **The Effects of Bias.**
Druckman, James N. and Michael Parkin. 2005. "The Impact of Media Bias: How Editorial
Slant Affects Voters" *Journal of Politics* 67(4): 1030-1049
8. Tuesday, April 22, 2010. **The Hostile Media Phenomenon.**
Coe, et al. 2008. "Hostile News: Partisan Use and Perceptions of Cable News
Programming" *Journal of Communication* 58: 201-219
9. Tuesday, April 27, 2010. **In-Your-Face TV.**
Mutz, Diana C. 2007. "Effects of 'In-Your-Face' Television Discourse on Perceptions of a
Legitimate Opposition" *American Political Science Review* 101: 621-635
10. Thursday, April 29, 2010. **Soft News.**
Baum, Matthew A. and Angela S. Jamison. "The *Oprah* Effect: How Soft News Helps
Inattentive Citizens Vote Consistently" *Journal of Politics* 68(4): 946-959

11. Tuesday, May 4, 2010. **New Media.**
 - (1) IM Ch. 5.
 - (2) Hargittai, Eszter, Jason Gallo, and Matthew Kane. 2008. "Cross-ideological discussions among conservative and liberal bloggers" *Public Choice* 134: 67-86
 - (3) Lawrence, Eric, John Sides, and Henry Farrell. 2010. "Self-Segregation or Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(1): 141-57
12. Thursday, May 6, 2010. **Campaign Advertising.**
 - (1) IM Ch. 6.
 - (2) Sides, John and Andrew Karch. 2008. "Messages that Mobilize? Issue Publics and the Content of Campaign Advertising" *Journal of Politics* 70(2): 466-476
13. Tuesday, May 11, 2010. **Going Negative.**

Lau, Richard R., Lee Sigelman, and Ivy Brown Rover. 2007. "The Effects of Negative Political Campaigns: A Meta-Analytic Reassessment" *Journal of Politics* 69(4): 1176-1209
14. Thursday, May 13, 2010. **Issue Ownership.**

Kaplan, Noah, David Park, and Travis Ridout. 2006. "Dialogue in American Politics? An Examination of Issue Convergence in Candidate Television Advertising." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3):724-736
15. Tuesday, May 18, 2010. **Jamming.**

TBA
16. Thursday, May 20, 2010. **Framing.**
 - (1) IM Ch. 7, 10.
 - (2) Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2007. "Framing Public Opinion in Competitive Democracies" *American Political Science Review* 101 (4): 637-655
17. Tuesday, May 25, 2010. **Priming.**
 - (1) IM Ch. 8, 9.
 - (2) Druckman, James N., Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Eric Ostermeier. 2004. "Candidate Strategies to Prime Issues and Image" *Journal of Politics* 66(4): 1180-1202
18. Thursday, May 27, 2010. **News and Knowledge.**

Jerit, Jennifer, Jason Barabas, and Tory Bolsen. 2006. "Citizens, Knowledge, and the Information Environment" *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2): 266-282.
19. Tuesday, June 1, 2010. **Media Effects That Matter.**

Gilens, Martin, Lynn Vavreck, and Martin Cohen. 2007. "The Mass Media and the Public's Assessments of Presidential Candidates 1952-2000." *Journal of Politics* 69: 1160-75
20. Thursday, June 3, 2010

IM Ch. 11