

POL 2170/ENG 1723
Spring 2011
Section D1: M/W 1:25-2:40 PM
SCW 501

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Hours: By appointment
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Media and Politics

Thomas Jefferson once said that “were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.” But if the media is so important in a democracy, then why do others, like George Orwell, feel that “no event is ever correctly reported in a newspaper”? This course will analyze the relationship between the mass media and politics in the U.S. and attempt to explain both the importance of the media in political life as well as its limitations. We will discuss how the mass media has changed over time; the ways in which the media shape our perceptions of political events; whether or not the media is biased; how media outlets cover scandals and wars; political advertising; and the impact of “new media” such as blogs. As an integral part of this course, each student will create their own blog and use it as a medium for communicating their views on the issues we discuss to the entire class.

Required Books

There is one required text for this course. It is available at Barnes and Noble on 18th Street:

- Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, eds., *Institutions of American Democracy: The Press* (Oxford University Press, 2005)

Other articles and materials will be made available online or through Angel.

Course Learning Objectives

This is a demanding course that requires significant amounts of reading, writing, and intensive class discussions. Students are expected not only to learn the substantive material, but also to apply the theoretical concepts they learn across a wide range of substantive areas. By the end of the semester, students should be able to critique scholarly work by relying on empirical evidence, write concisely and thoroughly on the topic of media bias, and present their findings to others through oral communication.

Course Requirements

- 1) Complete all readings on schedule. If you miss a class, email me for the next reading assignment, as the schedule may change.
- 2) Attend on time and actively participate in class discussions. Those who arrive more than 5 minutes late, or who leave in the middle of class, will automatically be marked for half an absence. Each student is allowed only **two** unexcused absences. Your participation grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter for each unexcused absence over two. Not being active during

class discussions will also result in a lowering of your participation grade. Use of phones, blackberries, or music players during class is **absolutely prohibited** and will result in a lowering of your participation grade.

3) Take pop quizzes. I do this to ensure that everyone is completing the assigned reading and participating in discussions.

4) Create, maintain, and consistently update your own blog. This is an ongoing assignment and you will be graded on the totality of your work at the end of the semester.

No later than the second week of classes, you will create your own blog. You may use any method to do this you wish, though the simplest way is to use the software at www.blogger.com. Once you have created your blog, email me the link and I will put you in my personal blogroll (at politicsbyadler.blogspot.com). The following week you are required to begin posting as well as commenting on other students' blog posts. You must write a substantive post at least twice a week and write two substantive comments a week to other students' blogs. (I will comment on your blogs, and you should feel free to comment on mine.) Additionally, your blog must have in its blogroll every other blog in the class, in order to maintain consistent communication and discussion as the semester progresses. The topics of your posts should be clearly related to the material we are discussing in class.

5) Write an analytical report on a book regarding the media. You will be given a list of books to choose from. Once you have made your selection, it is your responsibility to acquire and read the book. No later than **Wednesday, March 9th** you will submit a 4-5 page paper that fairly presents the book's central ideas, scrupulously examines its arguments, and provides your own views on the topic as informed by empirical evidence. **No late papers will be accepted.** However, if you turn the paper in on time, I will give you the option of revising it within one week of when I return it to you. You **must** use outside sources besides those provided in the syllabus - at least 2 non-Internet sources.

All written assignments must be typed in a 12 point font, double spaced, with one-inch margins, and have page numbers. Papers not meeting these criteria will be penalized.

6) Write a paper on media bias in one specific area and present your findings to the class. Everyone will be assigned to research a different topic. You will assess the coverage of some important topic or event in three major media outlets, and discuss the extent to which the coverage differs and the extent to which it is biased. Of the three outlets you examine, at least one must be a print source (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*) and at least one must be from television (CNN, FOX News, MSNBC). To what degree are ideological biases apparent from the differences between the various sources? Would the average reader/viewer realize the bias? No later than **Wednesday, April 13th** you will submit a 5-6 page paper that presents material from the three outlets and analyzes the differences between them. **No late papers will be accepted.** However, if you turn the paper in on time, I will give you the option of revising it within one week of when I return it to you. Toward the end of the semester, each student will make a 5-10 minute presentation of their findings to the class.

7) Take the final exam. It will consist of essay questions and will be given in-class. I will likely give you sample questions ahead of the test.

Grading

Work conducted towards the end of the semester will be more heavily weighted in my mind when dispensing final grades; in other words, *improvement counts*.

Attendance/Participation: 10%

Quizzes: 10%

Blog: 15%

Analytical report: 15%

Media bias project: 25%

Final: 25%

Incompletes will only be given for valid, documented emergencies.

NOTE ON PLAGIARISM: Any student found plagiarizing work will automatically receive a grade of **zero** for that assignment and an **F** for the course. **It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism; if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask!**

Accessibility

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, (917)326-4828, during the first week of class. Once you have been approved for accommodations, contact me to ensure the successful implementation of those accommodations.

Schedule of Classes and Exams

January 31st: Introduction

February 2nd and 7th: The Partisan Press, Muckraking, and the Rise of Mass Communication

Paul Starr, "Governing in the Age of Fox News" -

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/01/governing-in-the-age-of-fox-news/7845/>

"The Rise of Mass Communication" -

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=343

Michael Schudson and Susan E. Tiftt, "American Journalism in Historical Perspective," O&J chapter 2

February 9th: Radio, Television, and the Changing Media Landscape

FDR, Fireside Chat #1, “On the Banking Crisis” -
<http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3298>

“How the Nixon-Kennedy Debate Changed the World” -
<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2021078,00.html>

James N. Druckman, “The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debate Revisited” [Angel]

February 14th, 16th and 21st: The Media and Democracy

James Curran, “What Democracy Requires of the Media,” O&J chapter 7

Robert Schmuhl and Robert G. Picard, “The Marketplace of Ideas,” O&J chapter 8

Maxwell McCombs, “The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press,” O&J chapter 9

W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, “The Watchdog Role,” O&J chapter 10

Thomas Patterson and Philip Seib, “Informing the Public,” O&J chapter 11

Esther Thorson, “Mobilizing Citizen Participation,” O&J chapter 12

Bruce W. Sanford and Jane E. Kirtley, “The First Amendment Tradition and its Critics,” O&J chapter 15

February 23rd and 28th: The Media and Democracy - Scandals

“Richard Nixon, 37th President” -
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/37_nixon/nixon_politics.html

Mark Feldstein, “Watergate Revisited” [Angel]

Regina G. Lawrence and W. Lance Bennett, “Rethinking Media Politics and Public Opinion: Reactions to the Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal” [Angel]

Marvin Kalb, “The Rise of the ‘New News’: A Case Study of Two Root Causes of the Modern Scandal Coverage” [Angel]

March 2nd and 7th: The Media and Democracy - War

William Prochnau, “The Military and the Media,” O&J chapter 19

Jacqueline Sharkey, “The Television War” [Angel]

New York Times v. United States (1971) –

Justice Black:

http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0403_0713_ZC.html

Justice Harlan:

http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0403_0713_ZD1.html

Listen to “Wikileaks: A Reminder of the Pentagon Papers” -

<http://www.npr.org/2010/11/30/131687812/wikileaks-a-reminder-of-the-pentagon-papers>

March 9th: How Politicians Use the Media

George Lakoff – “Frames and Brains” [Angel]

Frank Luntz – “The Language of Financial Reform” [Angel]

March 14th and 16th: Media Bias

Media Research Center, “The Liberal Media Exposed” [Angel]

FAIR – “Challenging the ‘Liberal Media’ Claim” [Angel]

Robert W. McChesney, “Making Media Democratic” -

<http://bostonreview.net/BR23.3/mcchesney.html>

Tim Groseclose and Jeffrey Milyo, “A Measure of Media Bias” [Angel]

March 21st and 23rd: Political Advertising

Erika Franklin Fowler and Travis N. Ridout, “Advertising Trends in 2010” [Angel]

The :30 Second Candidate: <http://www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/>

Watch a selection of ads on <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>

March 28th and 30th: New Media - Presidential Campaigns

Matthew Hindman, “The Real Lessons of Howard Dean” [Angel]

Audrey A. Haynes and Brian Pitts, “Making an Impression: New Media in the 2008 Presidential Nomination Campaigns” [Angel]

Samuel Greengard, “The First Internet President” [Angel]

April 4th and 6th: New Media – Blogs

Laura McKenna and Antoinette Pole, “What Do Bloggers Do? An Average Day on an Average Political Blog” [Angel]

Eric Lawrence, John Sides, and Henry Farrell, “Self-Segregation or Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics” [Angel]

April 11th and 13th: *The Daily Show* and the Rise of Entertainment Journalism

Bill Carter and Brian Stelter, “In ‘Daily Show’ Role on 9/11 Bill, Echoes of Murrow” [Angel]

Geoffrey Baym, “*The Daily Show*: Discursive Integration and the Reinvention of Political Journalism” [Angel]

Jody Baumgartner and Jonathan S. Morris, “*The Daily Show* Effect: Candidate Evaluations, Efficacy, and American Youth” [Angel]

April 15th-27th: Spring Break

May 2nd, 4th, and 9th: Presentations on Media Bias Project

Monday, May 23rd, 9:30-11:30 AM: Final Exam