

MMC 3614 – Media and Politics
Fall Semester 2013
M: 8th Period; W: 8-9th Period

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Introduction:

We live in an era of unprecedented media coverage in a time of unimagined levels of political access. This class will look to highlight those current-day political trends as they are reported, analyzed and deliberated over throughout our 24-7 news cycle. Class topics will range from the framing of public policy and ethical debate, to the media's coverage of the growing societal, economic and environmental challenges we face both in America and globally. We will study how these challenges are often paradoxically helped and exacerbated in a digital age, as well as the inevitable adaptations these new mediums require of our journalists in our ever-changing political landscape.

Readings:

There are three required textbooks for this class. However, I will also provide ancillary materials to read throughout the semester, all of which will be listed on the class login on Sakai.

- Iyengar, S. (2011). *Media politics: A citizen's guide* (2nd ed.). New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Klaehn, J. (2010). *The political economy of media and power* (1st ed.). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- McChesney, R. W. (2013) *Digital disconnect - How capitalism is turning the internet against democracy* (1st ed.). New York: The New Press.

Student Objectives:

- Review the differences across local, national and international political media techniques.
- Understand the role and impact that media has throughout the political spectrum.
- Study the importance digital media has on breaking news dissemination.
- Analyse the historical trends of media ownership and how it impacts both campaign and news coverage.
- Discuss the methods in which the most salient political topics are covered in an ever-increasing political and media divide.

Attendance:

Attendance for this class is required. There is an expectation that you will not only attend but actively contribute in every class session. Attendance will be monitored throughout the semester, and if you are consistently absent from class, your participation grade will be reduced.

The topics we cover will be dialogical in nature. I hope that you will give your own perspective, as well as challenging those offered in the weekly readings. In order to do so effectively, the onus on assimilating the course material before coming to class is essential.

Class Procedures:

- Please keep your cell phones on silent and put away during class.
- Laptops are allowed in class, but will typically not be needed. If you are using a laptop in class, please be alert and on task.
- Please check your UF email account at least once a week for class updates.
- I will respond to all student emails within 24 hours.

Academic Honesty:

As a student at the University of Florida, you have agreed to comply with the University Honor Code. The guidelines for the department state: "It is expected that you will exhibit ethical behavior in your classes. Students are expected to do their own work, use their own words in papers and to reference outside sources appropriately."

You are encouraged to read the online materials that explain what academic honesty violations are and the associated penalties. If you are found to commit an academic honesty violation in this course, the minimum punishment you will receive is a zero on the assignment and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs.

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Disability Requests:

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor. <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/getstarted.php>

Assignments:

The class will be divided into six groups. You will remain in your group throughout the semester for both the current news and broadcast story assignments, as well as the political perspectives assignment.

Both the short paper and the political perspectives paper must be submitted in a digital format **before the class begins** (via Turnitin on the class webpage on Sakai) and in hard-copy format **at the beginning of class** for full credit to be received.

All assignments must:

- Be written in 12 point font, Times New Roman.
- Utilise APA as your academic format.
- Have an appropriate title.
- Have your name and date on it.
- Be double-spaced with one-inch margins.
- Have a bibliography attached.

Current News Story and Class Participation

Each Wednesday, one group will be expected to select, discuss and present (5-10minutes) two news articles with contrasting points of view on the same political story that has broken in the past week.

To receive full credit, the link to the two chosen articles and a brief outline (50-100 words) on why you have chosen them must be emailed to me by **Sunday at 6 p.m. prior to the following Wednesday class** by one member of the group. This will allow me to give sufficient notice to assign the articles as a reading for the rest of the class, so as to facilitate discussion. You may choose articles that either explicitly or more implicitly include the authors' political or personal opinions. You will be graded on the relevance the articles have to the semester's readings, as well as your in-class synopsis.

You will be expected to:

- Choose at least one major, reputable news outlet as a source. E.g., NY Times, Guardian, Politico, etc.
- Discuss why you chose each particular story and news outlet.
- Highlight the pros and cons of how the article reports the information – has it been misleading, has it left vital information out, is it purposefully speculative, etc.?
- Describe how the article has or hasn't changed your opinion on the topic.
- Offer suggestions as to the impact the story may have on future issues in the political or media sphere.

Current Broadcast Story

The expectations of this assignment are the same as above, except you must present two short video or radio clips and contrast their differing political viewpoints.

Quizzes

There will be five 10-minute quizzes (each worth 2.5% of your overall grade) throughout the semester. Each quiz consists of 10 multiple-choice questions based on the readings required for that class day. **I will not outline the class dates** for these quizzes as this will be my means in which to further assess class participation and attendance. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped.

Short Paper

Identify a recent political story from an online/print news source (published no longer than one month prior to the assignment deadline) and write a five-page paper discussing the article and its impact on: you as a citizen, the political ramifications of the event and how it impacts the greater news context. Discuss the sourcing of the article, how polls or surveys were used, the partisanship of the article, and how the issue was framed, etc. You are required to utilise and cite **three different scholarly articles** as means to back up your arguments throughout the paper. Please attach the news article to the back of the hard copy.

Mid-Term and Final Exam

Both exams will consist of 40 multiple-choice questions and five short essay questions. The mid-term will potentially test on everything we have covered in class and in your designated readings up to that point. The final exam will do the same but test on the entire course. I will provide a study guide for both.

Personal Perspectives Paper

In your group, you will be assigned one of the topics below and required to construct a 10-12-page paper and give a 15-minute presentation. You will be expected to discuss how the issue has been portrayed in the media and the accuracy of that portrayal. You are required to utilise and cite **five different scholarly articles** so as to supplement your views with academic

theory, e.g., agenda-setting, priming, etc. You may critique and cite as many news articles as you feel are necessary to support your discussion points as well. Based on your research, you will identify and highlight how the various interest groups and stakeholders have impacted or been impacted upon in the debate – whether they are governmental, private, citizen, etc. –and how the media has covered their viewpoints. As some of these topics may well be sensitive to your classmates, be mindful of how you present your findings.

US Public Policy

1. The arguments for the implementation/repeal of “Obamacare.”
Example stakeholders: Health policy analyst for Center for American Progress; Tea Party candidate running for re-election; chronically-ill Medicare patient; CNN political commentator; NY Times op-ed journalist; small-business owner; and, of course, President Obama.
2. Landmark supreme court rulings – DOMA or Voting Rights Act (**pick one**).
3. Gun control in the aftermath of the Newtown, CT. shooting.
4. The effect of America’s war on drugs.

Environmental Policy

5. The Keystone XL Pipeline and its place in the debate on climate change denial.
6. Weighing the benefits and risks of fracking as an alternative energy source.

Foreign Policy

7. The challenges faced in combating modern-day domestic terrorism.
8. US intervention in the Middle East post-Afghanistan.

Economic Policy

9. Comparing and contrasting the Wall Street and General Motors bailouts.
10. Election-cycle coverage of the economy – e.g., jobs, the deficit, US national debt, methods of taxation, the fiscal cliff, debt ceiling, etc.

Grading:

Current news/broadcast stories and class participation – 10%

Class quizzes – 10%

Short paper – 10%

Mid-term exam – 20%

Final exam – 25%

Political perspectives paper and presentation – 25%

Bonus points – For every 100 points your group receives in class exercises, every member will gain a 1% increase in their overall class grade.

Grading Scale:

A: 90-100%

B: 80-89%

C: 70-79%

D: 60-69%

F: 59% and below

Wed., Aug. 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Syllabus overview. · Class and assignment expectations. · Topics of discussion throughout the semester. 	
Mon., Aug. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Comparing international political media coverage. 	Read: Iyengar, Chapter 1
Wed., Aug. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The implications of private vs. public ownership. 	Group 1 – Current News Story Presentation Read: Iyengar, Chapter 2
Mon., Sept. 2	Labor Day – No Class.	
Wed., Sept. 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The media marketplace. · Local vs. national public affairs coverage. · The decline of adversarial journalism. 	Group 2 – Current News Story Presentation Read: Iyengar, Chapter 3
Mon., Sept. 9		Read: Iyengar, Chapter 4
Wed., Sept. 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · How new media is shaping our news delivery and consumption. · Civic engagement. · Blogosphere politics. 	Group 3 – Current News Story Presentation Read: Iyengar, Chapter 5
Mon., Sept. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Campaigning through the media. 	Read: Iyengar, Chapter 6
Wed., Sept. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Governing through the media. · Campaign finance reform. · Message dissemination. · Policy vs. electoral goals. 	Group 4 – Current News Story Presentation Read: Iyengar, Chapter 7
Mon., Sept. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Media effects. 	Read: Iyengar, Chapter 8
Wed., Sept. 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Memorable campaigns. · Voter participation. · Primary campaign momentum. · <i>Guest speaker – April Hines</i> 	Group 5 – Current News Story Presentation Read: Iyengar, Chapter 9
Mon., Sept. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The consequences of going public. · Impact of news coverage on presidential popularity. 	Read: Iyengar, Chapter 10
Wed., Oct. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Evaluating media politics. · Where do we go from here? 	Group 6 – Current News Story Presentation Read: Iyengar, Chapter 11 Short Paper Due
Mon., Oct. 7	*Catch-up day	Read: Klaehn, Chapter 1.
Wed., Oct. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The elephant in the digital age of news communication. 	Group 1 – Current Broadcast Story Presentation Read: McChesney, Chapter 1
Mon., Oct. 14	<i>Mid-Term Exam Preparation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The myth of commercialism. · Why market approaches to 	Read: Klaehn, Chapter 14.

	broadcasting does not work.	
Wed., Oct. 16	· Does capitalism equal democracy?	Group 2 – Current Broadcast Story Presentation Read: McChesney, Chapter 2 <i>Mid-Term Exam</i>
Mon., Oct. 21	· The broadcasting of wartime images. · Mediating power.	Read: Klaehn, Chapter 5
Wed., Oct. 23	· Review political economic theory and its relation to the internet.	Group 3 – Current Broadcast Story Presentation Read: McChesney, Chapter 3
Mon., Oct. 28	· Journalism faculty filtering news and politics and its relation to propaganda.	Read: Klaehn, Chapter 9
Wed., Oct. 30	· How the internet impacts and is impacted by capitalism I.	Group 4 – Current Broadcast Story Presentation Read: McChesney, Chapter 4
Mon., Nov. 4	· How the pharmaceutical industry determines the narrative on and cost of drugs.	Read: Klaehn, Chapter 10
Wed., Nov. 6	· How the internet impacts and is impacted by capitalism I.	Group 5 – Current Broadcast Story Presentation Read: McChesney, Chapter 5
Mon., Nov. 11	<i>Veterans Day – No Class</i>	
Wed., Nov. 13	· The death and rebirth of journalism.	Group 6 – Current Broadcast Story Presentation Read: McChesney, Chapter 6
Mon., Nov. 18	· Where does the digital age of journalism go next?	Read: McChesney, Chapter 7
Wed., Nov. 20	<i>Political Perspectives Group Presentations</i>	<i>Political Perspectives Paper Due</i>
Mon., Nov. 25	<i>Political Perspectives Group Presentations</i>	
Wed., Nov. 27	<i>Thanksgiving</i>	
Mon., Dec. 2	*Catch-up day	
Wed., Dec. 4	<i>Exam Preparation</i>	
Mon., Dec. 9		<i>Final Exam</i>

***Catch-up day: The opportunity to discuss a topic you feel we didn't spend enough time covering or a topic that we have neglected to mention that you feel is both politically important and relevant to the class.**