

MMC 3614 – Media and Politics
Summer A 2014
Online Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Cory L. Armstrong

Office: Weimer 3045

Office Hours: see course outline or by appointment

Phone: 352-392-0847

E-mail: carmstrong@jou.ufl.edu

Catalog Description: Provide an understanding of the role of the media in the political system. Course topics include televised debates, political advertising, political journalism, Internet and alternative media.

Course Objectives:

This is a course that examines the role of media in shaping American politics. By the end of the course, students will:

- Recognize the fundamental role of media in shaping the public's perception of politicians, the government, and the political structure.
- Understand the importance of the Internet and social media in the modern information age and the profound effect it has on media coverage, campaigns, and privacy.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of certain media sources and develop ways to ascertain the validity of information from media sources.
- Identify how political figures are affected by the media and ways in which political figures respond to, influence, or even manipulate news coverage.

Required Readings:

1. Iyengar, S. (2011). *Media politics: A citizen's guide* (2nd ed.). New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
2. Additional readings will be included in certain modules.

Course structure: This course is web-only. A learning module has been set up for each section of the class. Each module will have an assignment due on a Wednesday during the course, although some Wednesdays will have multiple assignments due. It is the student's responsibility to follow and adhere to this schedule. Each module contains a lecture, readings, discussion topics, and a quiz. Two exams will also evaluate your knowledge and understanding of the material. Final grades will be developed from a mixture of quizzes, discussions, assignments and exams. See the grade breakdown later in this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to follow and adhere to this schedule.

Course Requirements:

Deadlines: The assignments in this class will all be turned in via SAKAI. If you experience technical difficulties, your first line of defense will be to contact the UF HelpDesk at 392-HELP. If they cannot resolve your issue, please contact your instructor regarding these issues. Please plan accordingly to negotiate these potential interruptions, as it is your responsibility to turn in assignments by the deadlines

Assignments:

1. *Module Quizzes*: Students will complete an online quiz for each learning module in the class, based on readings and lecture materials.
2. *Peer Discussion Posts and Replies*: Each student is required to post (roughly 200-300 words) discussing the reading and lecture content. Specifically, this will include responding to the specific discussion questions and thoughts put forth by the instructor within the learning module. Then, each student is required to respond to two group members' discussion posts (roughly 100 words each). These responses should also have a clear thesis and correct grammar to receive credit.
3. *Midterm and Final Exams*: Students will complete exams based on course material. Portions will be both objective and essay.

Note: The Summer A class will NOT have a media analysis paper due, so any mentions in the lecture (taped in the spring) to that assignment can be ignored.

Evaluation:

Earning your grade:

Module quizzes (10 points each = 80 points total)	10 percent
Peer Discussion Posts/ Replies (20 points each = 160 points total)	40 percent
Exam 1 (100 points)	25 percent
Exam 2 (100 points)	25 percent

Grading Scale:

A = 92-100
A- = 90-91.99
B+ = 88-89.99
B = 82-87.99
B- = 80-81.99
C+ = 78-79.99
C = 72-77.99
C- = 70-71.99
D+ = 68-69.99
D = 62-67.99
D- = 60-61.99
Below 60 = E

The university's grading policy can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Makeup: Make-up assignments and exams are not permitted. However, under an extreme circumstance, if you have an excused absence AND the professor was notified in advance, an exception may be made. Information about university's policies on this issue can be found here:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Miscellaneous:

Discussion board policies: We will be covering sensitive topics in this class and students may have strong feelings about particular issues discussed in class. Everyone deserves a safe environment in which to participate in class discussions. Therefore, be respectful in all of your discussion posts and student interaction.

- Use attention-getting subject lines in all posts. DO NOT title each post with "Module 1, Module 2" etc. Instead, label the subject in a way that accurately describes its content.
- Responses should include a clear thesis statement and correct grammar within each post and cite any material (in lecture or readings) as appropriate.
- Proper grammar and word usage is expected.
- No derogatory language will be tolerated. If you have questions about the use of specific words or language that may be deemed derogatory, obscene, or biased in some way, you should speak with the instructor before including this language in your post.
- ONLY thoughtful posts that adhere to these policies (including due dates and times) will receive full credit.

Discussion Post Due Dates: To receive credit, all posts and replies will be due on Wednesday nights by 11:59 p.m. Please note, however, that the schedule may call for multiple modules to end on Wednesdays. Any posts received after that time will not receive credit.

Discussion Groups: Students will be randomly assigned to groups for the discussion posts and these groups will be the same for the entire semester. The purpose of the groups is only to allow for small group discussion—no group work will be assigned. Each student will be evaluated individually on his/her posts.

Extra Credit: Students can receive up-to-two percentage points of extra credit by attending a political-related event on campus. Specific suggestions and parameters are available on the assignments page.

Plagiarism/Cheating:¹ It is expected that you will exhibit ethical behavior in this class. Students are expected to do their own work, use their own words in papers, and to reference outside sources appropriately. Students are further expected to observe intellectual property rights and to comply with copyright laws. That means you must obtain written permission to use copyrighted materials in any work you submit for this class. It also means you will not plagiarize the words, designs, concepts or ideas of others.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or accidental, has become easier to commit since the advent of the Web. Plagiarism is defined as "...taking someone's words or ideas as if they were your own." Source: [Dictionary.com](#).

That means you cannot take even a single sentence from another Web site without attribution. It means you cannot take someone else's design and replace the words and pictures with your own. It means that if you use even a few of someone else's words verbatim, you must put quotation marks around them and cite the source.

¹ Used with permission from UF Journalism Professor David Carlson.

Georgetown University offers a useful [tutorial](#) on plagiarism. It says:

- "If you use someone else's ideas or words, cite the source.
- "If the way in which you are using the source is unclear, make it clear.
- "If you received specific help from someone, acknowledge it."

If you find yourself wondering whether you have crossed the line of plagiarism, you almost assuredly have. When in doubt, ask the professor.

It is true that students sometimes plagiarize unintentionally or by accident. That is neither a defense nor an excuse. To avoid accidental plagiarism, it is extremely important to keep careful notes about what came from where, especially when doing online research. If you are cutting and pasting paragraphs from Web sites to your notes, you are in very risky territory; save the citations along with the material.

Your work will be checked for plagiarism, so just don't do it. Failure to uphold the standards of academic honesty will result in a failing grade for the course and, potentially, other serious disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Turnitin.com: Your media analysis project will be submitted to the TurninIn.com web site, which tests for plagiarism. Your instructor may also test other work through the same site, if she suspects plagiarism has occurred.

Remember, when you completed the registration form at the University of Florida, you signed the following statement:

"I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University."

Furthermore, on work submitted for credit, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

If you are aware of a climate that promotes academic dishonesty, please notify the instructor or contact the Student Honor Court (392-1631) or Cheating Hotline (392-6999).

Special needs: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students will provide documentation of the necessary accommodation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor within the first two weeks of the semester. *This course conforms to all requirements of the ADA and handles with sensitivity all matters related to gender, race, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability. Please alert the instructor if any issues arise.*

Instructor Office Hours: The instructor will hold on-campus office hours by appointment. In addition, the instructor will hold periodic class chats on May 29 and June 18. See schedule

below. As noted in the syllabus to discuss class assignments and issues. While not mandatory, attendance at these chats is STRONGLY encouraged.

Course evaluations: Students are expected to provide feedback on class instruction during the last week of class each semester. This can be found at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/>

Tentative Schedule: The instructor reserves the right to modify this schedule as necessary for the betterment of the class.

DATE	TOPIC/ASSIGNMENTS	READINGS
Module 1 May 12-14	<i>Module 1: Introduction and Class Requirements</i> Assignment: Quiz 1; Discussion Posts 1 <i>Due by 11:59 p.m. on May 14</i>	Course Syllabus, Assignments and Discussion Pages
Module 2 May 15-17	<i>Module 2: Media and American Politics: What are we doing here?</i> Assignment: Quiz 2; Discussion Posts 2 <i>Due by 11:59 p.m. on May 21</i>	Iyengar, Ch. 2 (pp. 18-49).
Module 3 May 18-21	<i>Module 3: Media, Elections and Debates: What are the rules?</i> Assignment: Quiz 3; Discussion Posts 3 <i>Due by 11:59 p.m. on May 21</i>	Iyengar, Ch. 9 (pp. 272-305); Ch. 6, pp. 181-190); Ch. 3, pp. 50-89
Module 4 May 22-28	<i>Module 4: Media and the Three Branches of Government: How does it work?</i> Assignment: Quiz 4; Discussion Posts 4 <i>Due by 11:59 p.m. on May 28</i>	Iyengar, Ch. 7 (pp. 195-222); Ch. 9 (pp. 306-333); Two readings in SAKAI
May 29- May 31	<i>Exam 1: Open between May 29-31 (11:59 p.m.)</i> <i>Virtual Office Hours:10 a.m.-11 a.m., May 29</i>	
Module 5 June 1-4	<i>Module 5: Media and Public Opinion: More polling required?</i> Assignment: Quiz 5; Discussion Posts 5 <i>Due by 11:59 p.m. on June 4</i>	Iyengar, Ch. 8, (pp. 229-271)
Module 6 June 5-11	<i>Module 6: Politics and The Internet: Interactivity and Social Media</i> Assignment: Quiz 6; Discussion Posts 6 <i>Due by 11:59 p.m. on June 11</i>	Iyengar, Ch. 5 (pp. 113-148); Other readings in SAKAI
Module 7 June 12-14	<i>Module 7: Selling and Spinning: Political Advertising</i> Assignment: Quiz 7; Discussion Posts 7 <i>Due by 11:59 p.m. on June 18</i>	Iyengar, Ch. 6 (pp. 149-181); Ch. 7 (pp. 222-225)
Module 8 June 15-18	<i>Module 8: Media pundits and ethics in politics: Blurring the lines</i> Assignment: Quiz 9; Discussion Posts 9 <i>Due by 11:59 p.m. on June 18</i>	Iyengar, Ch. 4 (pp. 92-112)
June 18-20	<i>Exam 2: Open between June 18-20 (11:59 p.m.)</i> <i>Virtual Office hours, 10 a.m.-11 a.m., June 18</i>	

