

**SYLLABUS**  
**MEDIA AND POLITICS**  
**MMC 3614/SECTION 1C34**  
**SPRING 2017**  
**ONLINE**

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**Office:** Weimer Hall G034

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 3-4 p.m., by appointment, or via Skype

*(Note: I will be traveling extensively this semester, so it might be a good idea to check with me first before stopping by my office.)*

**Prerequisites:** None

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course is designed to give students an overview of the media's role in covering the U.S. political system and how the media themselves help shape American politics. Topics include the media's influence on public opinion; how campaigns communicate and are covered by the media; the watchdog role of the media; how polling and debates are used to frame political discourse; the role of political advertising in U.S. politics; and how incivility, negativity, and media bias affect political coverage. Students will also explore how social media and other forms of new media have changed political communication.

Because this is an online course conducted through Canvas, students are expected to keep up with class readings and engage in online discussions with their classmates.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the ways in which the media shape American political life and the ways in which politicians use the media to advance their agendas.
- Recognize the ways in which the media influence public opinion.
- Understand the watchdog role that journalists play in American political life.
- Understand the role various campaign tactics—such as polling, advertising, and debates—play in the operation of the U.S. political system.
- Analyze media phenomena—such as incivility, negativity, and bias—to understand how they affect political discourse.

- Recognize the ways in which new media forms, including social media, have changed how politicians communicate with the public and the ways journalists cover politics.

## CLASS MATERIALS

### Required Textbook

- Iyengar, S. (2016). *Media politics: a citizen's guide*. (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) New York: W.W. Norton.

(Note: The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of this book is acceptable if students want to buy one used.)

- Other texts will be posted on the Course Reserves section of Canvas or made available by the instructor with PDFs.

### Other Required Materials

- *The Candidate*, a movie that can be purchased on YouTube for \$2.99. (Module 6)

## COURSE STRUCTURE

This is a Web-only course, using the Canvas e-learning tool. Modules will be set up with an overview and assignments for each module. Because no face-to-face lectures will be held, the bulk of this course will consist of class readings with discussions, along with writing assignments and tests.

This is a journalism class, so students will be expected to write two news stories, one covering a debate and one covering a campaign event. However, because this class falls in a semester in which there are no political campaigns, these stories will be based on videos of previous events. The class will conclude with an in-depth book analysis that students will write on a book of their choosing.

The schedule for the class is listed at the end of this syllabus, and instructions for each module will be posted on Canvas and emailed to students at the beginning of each module. It is your responsibility to keep up with the schedule. Please note that the modules are not all the same length.

### Grading

A = 93-100	B- = 80-82	D+ = 67-69
A- = 90-92	C+ = 77-79	D = 63-66
B+ = 87-89	C = 73-76	D- = 60-63
B = 83-86	C- = 70-73	E = 59 and below

- **Module Discussions and Quizzes** = 50 percent of final grade
- **Exams** = 20 percent of final grade

- **Assignments** = 30 percent of final grade

### **Module Discussions and Quizzes**

- Discussion Questions: Each week, students will submit three discussion questions based on the overview, readings, and videos. These must be submitted by the end of the fourth day of the module (later for longer modules). (10 points)
- Discussion Answers: The instructor will select two discussion questions and post them in a discussion thread for everyone to answer. Students will have three days to post their responses and join in the discussion by offering at least four meaningful responses to classmates' posts (i.e. something more substantial than just agreeing or disagreeing). (15 points)
- Quiz: The quiz will cover the overview, readings, and videos each week. The format will be multiple choice or short answer. These must be completed by the end of the fourth day of the module (later for longer modules). Students can use readings and other class materials to complete quizzes; however, it is strongly recommended that you try to complete the quizzes from memory alone, as that will help you prepare for the exams. Exams will be based on the quizzes. (25 points)

### **Exams**

- Two exams will be given, each covering roughly half of the course. The format is multiple choice and some essay. The exams are not comprehensive, and there will be no final exam, although the last exam will be given during finals week. The exams will be time limited, and students CANNOT use class materials to complete the exam. Doing so is a violation of the UF Honor Code. (100 points each)

### **Assignments**

- Debate News Story (Due Wed. March 15 by 8 p.m.): Students will watch a video of a campaign debate, selected from a list provided by the instructor, and then write a 750-word news story as if you were in the hall, covering the debate. This will be graded with the system of deductions used in Multimedia Writing and Reporting, including -50 for fact errors. A rubric will be provided. (100 points)
- Campaign Event News Story (Due Wed. April 5 by 8 p.m.): Students will watch a video of a campaign speech, selected from a list provided by the instructor, and then write a 750-word news story as if you were in the hall, covering the debate. This will be graded with the system of deductions used in Multimedia Writing and Reporting, including -50 for fact errors. A rubric will be provided. (100 points)
- Political Book Analysis (Due Wed. April 19 by 8 p.m.): Students will read a book about media coverage and the political process, selected from a list provided by the instructor, and they will provide an analysis of the book. This must be more than simply a report outlining the content of the book. You need to go beyond to discuss why the book is relevant to the study of politics and media and what it tells

us about how media cover politics. You should buttress your analysis with what you have learned from class readings, materials, and discussions. You should also include your own reactions to the book, including whether you think its insights are supported. (100 points)

- You will notice from these dates that these three assignments are back-loaded toward the end of the semester. It is strongly recommended that you work ahead on these assignments so that you don't get into a time crunch toward the end of the semester.

## **DISCUSSION COURTESY**

This class features discussions about politics, and students from different sides of the political aisle may have strong feelings. Keep in mind, however, that we should be talking about issues surrounding media and politics, NOT rehashing our own political disputes. So please be courteous and respectful to your fellow students in discussions, and think before you post.

## **LATE WORK**

Meeting deadlines is an essential part of being a media professional. Therefore, work must be turned in on the due date; Canvas will turn off assignments after the due date, and you will not be able to submit them. If you are going to miss a deadline or an exam and have a legitimate excuse for doing so, it must be cleared with the instructor in advance. Do not wait until after you have missed the deadline to contact me, or you won't be able to make up the work.

University of Florida policy lists acceptable reasons for absences as “illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligations, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate.” If any of these situations falls on a deadline, please let me know in advance. For most assignments, you should have a sufficient amount of time to work around any of these situations. If you are unsure if your reason for missing a class is acceptable, don't assume it isn't; check with the instructor.

Please be mindful that technical issues can arise with Canvas, so it is probably not a good idea to wait until near deadline to submit assignments. You are still responsible for meeting deadlines.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All students are expected to abide by the University of Florida's rules for academic integrity, including the Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcode.php>).

Academic dishonesty will result in a zero on the assignment and could lead to failure in the course. The instructor is required to report any violations of the Honor Code to the Dean of Students Office, in accordance with University of Florida policy.

Quizzes and exams in this course will be administered through Canvas; providing help to, or receiving help from, anyone is a violation of the Honor Code and can result in penalties up to and including failure of the course. Plagiarism in any paper written for this course is also a violation of the Honor Code.

You can read about issues related to academic dishonesty in the College of Journalism and Communications at <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/academic/jou/honesty>

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

All students with disabilities will be accommodated, after the instructor receives a letter from the Disability Resource Center. Please contact the DRC if you need an accommodation; the DRC will then generate a letter for the instructor so that the accommodation can be made.

### **CHANGES TO SYLLABUS**

The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus or class schedule as the need arises.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

(DQ=Discussion Questions; DA=Discussion Answers)

### **MODULE 1: Introduction**

Opens: Mon. Jan 4

Closes: Fri. Jan 6

Students will post an introduction of themselves on the Discussion thread in Canvas. (10 points)

### **MODULE 2: Media Politics**

Opens: Mon. Jan 9 at 8 a.m.

Closes: Wed. Jan. 18 at 8 p.m.

READ: Overview

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 2 part (Media Politics as Successor to Party Politics)

READ (Google Books) Graber, D., & Dunaway, J. (2015). Chapter 4: Media and politics in the changing media landscape. In *Mass media and American politics*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

This chapter is available on Google Books at this link (scroll down to the Table of Contents and click on Chapter 4):

<https://books.google.com/books?id=WGMXBAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=mass+media+and+american+politics&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjT49T6lr3QAhXGQIYKHcbHC0MQ6AEIHTAA#v=onepage&q=mass%20media%20and%20american%20politics&f=false>

Other readings to be announced.

WATCH: Media Institution: Crash Course Government and Politics #44

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6F0g4N415uw>

Quiz/DQs Due: Thur. Jan 12 at 8 p.m.

DAs Due: Wed. Jan. 18 at 8 p.m.

### **MODULE 3: Media Influence**

Opens: Thur. Jan. 19 at 8 a.m.

Closes: Fri. Jan. 27 at 8 p.m.

READ: Overview

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 8 all (News and Public Opinion)

Other readings to be announced

WATCH: Justin Lewis video on Constructing Public Opinion

Available on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTQZH\\_Bm3eM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTQZH_Bm3eM)

Quiz/DQs Due: Tues. Jan. 24 at 8 p.m.

DAs Due: Tue Fri. Jan. 27 at 8 p.m.

## **MODULE 4: The Watchdog Role**

Opens: Mon. Jan. 30 at 8 a.m.

Closes: Tues. Feb. 7 at 8 p.m.

READ: Overview

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 3 part (What Gets Reported, Organizational Processes and Routines)

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 7 part (Presidential Communication, The Public Congressperson)

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 4 part (Indexing the News, National Security News)

READ: Articles 1-3 of U.S. Constitution; Bill of Rights (available online)

Other readings to be announced.

Quiz/DQs Due: Thur. Feb. 2 at 8 p.m.

DAs Due: Tues. Feb. 7 at 8 p.m.

## **MODULE 5: Political Communication or Media Manipulation?**

Opens: Wed. Feb. 8 at 8 a.m.

Closes: Thur. Feb. 16 at 8 p.m.

READ: Overview

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 6 part (Strategies for Managing the Press)

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 10 all (Consequences of Going Public)

Other readings to be announced.

WATCH: Shaping Public Opinion: Crash Course Government and Politics

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfIULVECAFO>

WATCH: John Stossel show on Political Propaganda

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6-qAnMB4Gg>

Quiz/DQs Due: Mon. Feb. 13 at 8 p.m.

DAs Due: Thur. Feb. 16 at 8 p.m.

## **MODULE 6: Campaigns**

Opens: Fri. Feb. 17 at 8 a.m.

Closes: Wed. March 1 at 8 p.m.

READ: Overview

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 9 all (Campaigns That Matter)

READ ONLINE: Klurfeld, J. (2015). Improving media capacity: media must focus on policy, not just politics. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2015/05/18/improving-media-capacity-media-must-focus-on-policy-not-just-politics/>

READ PDF: Lenz, G., & Lawson, C. (2011). Looking the part: television leads less informed citizens to vote based on candidates' appearance. *American Journal of Political Science*.

Other readings to be announced.

WATCH: Political Campaigns: Crash Course Government and Politics

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A5QlpAyKSQ>  
WATCH: *The Candidate* (1972)  
Available on YouTube for \$2.99: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiETSG40DfA>

Quiz/DQs Due: Fri. Feb. 24 at 8 p.m.  
**Exam 1: Fri. Feb. 24 on Canvas (Modules 2-5)**  
DAs Due: Wed. March 1 at 8 p.m.

### **MODULE 7: Polling and Debates**

Opens: Tues. March 2 at 8 a.m.  
Closes: Fri. March 17 at 8 p.m.  
*Note: This module runs before and after Spring Break.*

READ: Overview

READ ONLINE: Gawiser, S., & Witt, G. (n.d.) *20 Questions a journalist should ask about poll results*. Washington, DC: National Council on Public Polls.  
<http://www.ncpp.org/?q=node/4>

READ Kuypers, J. (2014). Chapter 6: Pushing their polls. In *Partisan journalism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (COURSE RESERVES)

READ Trent, J., Friedenber, R., & Denton, R. (2016). *Political campaign communication: principles & practices* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (COURSE RESERVES)

Other readings to be announced.

WATCH: Nixon/Kennedy 1960 First Debate

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbrCRKqLSRw>

WATCH: Trump/Clinton, 2016 First Debate

Available on C-Span: <https://www.c-span.org/presidentialDebate/?debate=first>

Quiz/DQs Due: Tues. March 14 at 8 p.m.  
**Debate News Story: Due Wed. March 15 by 8 p.m.**  
DAs Due: Fri. March 17 at 8 p.m.

### **MODULE 8: Political Advertising**

Opens: Mon. March 20 at 8 a.m.  
Closes: Tues. March 28 at 8 p.m.

READ: Overview

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 6 part (Advertising Strategy, Negative Advertising, Direct Mail)

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 7 part (The Rise of Issue Advertising)

Other readings to be announced.

WATCH: 1964 Daisy Ad

Available on You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cwqHB6QeUw>

WATCH 2016 Clinton Daisy Girl Ad

Available on You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npNqT3N1XoQ>

WATCH: 1964 Ice Cream Cone Ad

Available on You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ty4T5MuYRZw>

WATCH 1984: Morning in America Ad

Available on You Tube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_fy-uhxiXcE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_fy-uhxiXcE)

WATCH 1984: Bear in the Wood AD

Available on You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpwdcmjBgNA>

WATCH: 1988 Dukakis Tank Ad

Available on You Tube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRPZQ3UEN\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRPZQ3UEN_Q)

WATCH: 2010 Christine O'Donnell "I Am Not A Witch" Ad:

Available on You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKbFKZjvioE>

Quiz/DQs Due: Thur. March 23 at 8 p.m.

DAs Due: Tues. March 28 at 8 p.m.

### **MODULE 9: Politics and New/Alternative Media**

Opens: Wed. March 29 at 8 a.m.

Closes: Thur. April 6 at 8 p.m.

READ: Overview

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 5 all (New Media, New Forms of Campaigning)

Other readings to be announced.

WATCH: TedX Talk by Mark Shephard on Social Media's Effects on Politics

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-YUVP7G524>

WATCH: Video "Is Social Media Ruining Politics?" (Note: Watch first 30 minutes)

Available on You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8Wkzykk-RA>

Quiz/DQs Due: Mon. April 3 at 8 p.m.

**Campaign Speech News Story: Due Wed. April 5 by 8 p.m.**

DAs Due: Thur. April 6 at 8 p.m.

### **MODULE 10: Incivility, Negativity and Media Bias**

Opens: Fri. April 7 at 8 a.m.

Closes: Mon. April 17 at 8 p.m.

READ: Overview

READ: Iyengar, Ch. 11 part (Encouraging a More Partisan Press, Fostering Direct Communication)

READ Graber, D., & Dunaway, J. (2015). Chapter 12: Incivility, negativity, and bias in the media. In *Mass media and American politics*. Los Angeles: SAGE. (COURSE RESERVES)

Other readings to be announced.

WATCH: Media Bias Debated on *The View*

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siMNVkoE2q4>

WATCH: Bill O'Reilly Interview on Media Bias

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSFYnyZmaX0>

WATCH: Jon Stewart's Take on Media Bias

Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XV2MxD779c0>

Quiz/DQs Due: Wed. April 12 at 8 p.m.

DAs Due: Mon. April 17 at 8 p.m.

**Political Book Analysis:** Due April 19 by 8 p.m.

**Exam 3: Mon. April 24 or Tues. April 25 on Canvas (Modules 6-10)**