About this class: In the wake of a contentious 2016 presidential election cycle and amid heightened and ongoing concerns about the integrity of news gathering and (and sagging public opinion directed at media,) this class will explore what it means to report effectively about politics -- from the campaign trail, to polling, to the role of political operatives and propaganda. Students will learn about covering Congress, the federal agencies of government, about the political press nationally, including the White House press corps, and how that reporting cadre works, with a focus on Washington, D.C. and national affairs. The class, which will include frequent guest speakers as well as the production of original content, will also offer a foundation for state and local political reporting and issues, including work with public records and legal documents, as well as databases used frequently by political journalists. PS: We will definitely follow the money. PSS: Civics will matter — BIGLY.

"Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the president or any other public official, save exactly to the degree in which he himself stands by the country. It is patriotic to support him insofar as he efficiently serves the country. It is unpatriotic not to oppose him to the exact extent that by inefficiency or otherwise he fails in his duty to stand by the country. In either event, it is unpatriotic not to tell the truth, whether about the president or anyone else."
— Theodore Roosevelt

"Objective journalism is one of the main reasons that American politics has been allowed to be so corrupt for so long."
—Hunter S. Thompson
“Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. Tis dearness only that gives everything its value.”
— Thomas Paine

Class schedule:
Our course will be divided into 5 sections. Please come to class to stay on track. We will follow blogs and political pundits — so please also come well-read and prepared each week to thoughtfully discuss what has happened in political news nationwide, statewide and often locally. We will immerse ourselves in this world, the weekly tic-toc, all semester long. We will read three mass market books that will have out of class assignments attached. There will be readings assigned in-class and out each week, some related to the ongoing news cycle. We will have frequent guest speakers to discuss topics issues related to each core section. Please come to class to stay up to date on assignments and due dates for work as those may shift week to week. Also please remember: this is not a class about political activism or partisan politics. We are learning about the process of political reporting itself. And with that we will be discussing divergent viewpoints — some of which may not support your own views. Respect and tolerance are crucial as we talk about issues, ideas, bias and facts.

Section 1 — History, Civics + the Foundation of our Political System
Basic civics
History of government and political parties
History of political journalism — Colonial to Watergate
Key events in the past 20 years and analysis of coverage

Readings:
Book: "The Boys on The Bus"

https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/2016-election-demise-journalistic-standards/
Blogs you need to subscribe to and follow: (this list will grow with your input - this is a sample)
Los Angeles Times — Essential Politics
The Daily Beast — ADMITS
Lunchtime Politics — Ron Faucheux
legistorm.com
POLITICO Playbook
Real Clear Politics Carl Cannon's Morning Note
Ben Shapiro/http://www.dailywire.com/podcasts/show/ben-shapiro-show

Section 2 — The Players
What political reporters do?
Curating a list of experts to watch — who covers what?
Federal elections: rules, scope, process
Political consultants
Polling — How to Follow the Numbers, Critically
Campaign finance — How to Follow the Money
Politics and Opinion
Editorial writing
Candidate endorsements
Columns
Cartoons

Readings:
Book: "Dark Money" by Jane Mayer
https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/24/books/review/dark-money-by-jane-mayer.html?_r=0

http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/2016_newspaper_endorsements.php
http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/2016_newspaper_endorsements.php
Section 3—On the Job

Covering the White House
Covering Congressional/national races
Covering state government/lawmakers/races (Florida)
How campaigns work — The Cycle and Election Night
Covering Local Races — County, Municipalities, Cities

Book: Reading: "This Town" by Mark Leibovich

Section 4—Keeping them honest — Investigative reporting and politics

Watergate, Whitewater, An Intern (and some fateful hanging chads.)
Databases for political reporters
Fact-checking political news — politifact.com, Washington Post Fact-checker

Readings:

Section 5 — The Influencers — Communicating Brand
Politics, Celebrity and the Cult of Personality
Political Comedy — Stephen Colbert, SNL etc....
Social media/politics/branding


Grading

6 participation assignments (in and out of class) — 30 percent
3 main stories/packages — 50
Final project — 20 percent
Extra credit: publication of content (with approval of instructor)

Reference Book Reading List (we will add to this):

*****Denotes required reading
****The Boys on the Bus — Timothy Crouse
****This Town — Mark Leibovich
****Dark Money — Jane Mayer

All the President’s Men
Primary Colors, Joe Klein

The Speechwriter, Barton Swaim
The Smear: How Shady Political Operatives and Fake News Control What You See, What You Think, and How You Vote, Sharyl Attkisson (UF TEL alum)
Truth and Duty: The Press, The President and the Privilege of Power, Mary Mapes

Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail ’72, Hunter S. Thompson
Extortion & Throw Them All Out, Peter Schweizer
Infamous Scribblers, Eric Burns
Personal History, Katharine Graham
‘The Power Game,’ Hendrick Smith
‘The Power Broker,’ Robert Caro
Dana Perino, And The Good News Is

Jack Germond, Whose Broad Stripes
George HW Bush: All the Best: My Life in Letters and Other Writings
Ron Chernow, Washington
The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt by Edmund Morris
The Bully Pulpit by Doris Kearns Goodwin
The Yankee and Cowboy War by Carl Oglesby
The Making of a President 1960
Liberty and Tyranny by Mark Levin
The Power Broker: Robert Moses
The Fall of New York by Robert A Caro
The Prince of Darkness by Bob Novak
Game Change by John Heilemann and Mark Halperin
The Politics of Gratitude, Mark T. Mitchell