



# **MEDIA AND POLITICS**

## **MMC 3614**

### **Fall 2018**

Class time: M | Period 7 - 9 (1:55 PM - 4:55 PM)

Location: FLG 0245

Instructor: Sofiya Tarasevich

Office: G031

Office hours: by appointment

## **Course Description**

This course aims to familiarize students with the role of mass media in the political system, considering both historical circumstances that have led to the formation of the modern media system in the U.S., as well as modern political reality that journalists cover on a daily basis.

We will mostly concentrate on interaction of media and political institutions in the U.S., but will also discuss how this interaction works in other political systems, including developing democracies, non-democratic, and authoritarian countries. Understanding these differences will highlight the crucial role of mass media in the democratic system and illustrate why media are a necessary part of it.

Thus, in this course we will cover both the way media influence American political agenda (and vice versa), and the way international media coverage affects political process in the United States. This is especially important considering the number of international affairs issues (North Korean summit, the "Russian involvement" investigation, NATO summit, etc.) that affected internal politics in the U.S. during the Trump's term and the way media cover the current presidential administration.

## **Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to**

- Understand the role of mass media in shaping public opinion when it comes to political agenda;
- Define the role of free media as a necessary element of a democratic political system;
- Distinguish between different political systems and compare how they work in different countries, in different political circumstances with diverse cultural backgrounds;
- Know about existing theories in political communication field that explain how media affect public opinion;
- Explain how media coverage can affect politicians' approval rankings, electoral process, and legislative agenda;
- Provide contextual analysis of political media coverage of current events;
- Understand the role of social media in political process;

## **Class Participation and Attendance**

One of the key requirements for a successful completion of this course is class participation. Participation means not just attending the class, but also active participation in class discussions and activities. Discussions constitute 15% of the grade, so even if you write brilliant papers but do not attend the class the whole semester and do not participate in the discussions, the best grade you can receive for the course will be 85.

You can miss no more than two classes (due to health issues, family issues, etc.) without having to provide documentation.

## **Required and Optional Literature**

### **Required:**

- Iyengar, S. (2013). *Media politics: A citizen's guide* (3rd ed.). New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

- Some weeks I will upload additional media and academic articles that will be included in the list of required readings for that week (they will be in the updated syllabus after the drop-add week). I will post an announcement on Canvas notifying the class that the readings are available in "Files" on Canvas. We will discuss and analyze assigned readings in class, so make sure you go to class prepared.

- Please note that if you obtain a digital copy of Iyengar's textbook, it has the links to the videos that illustrate what the chapter is about. We will watch and discuss some of these videos in class, but you can always watch them at home while preparing for the discussion.

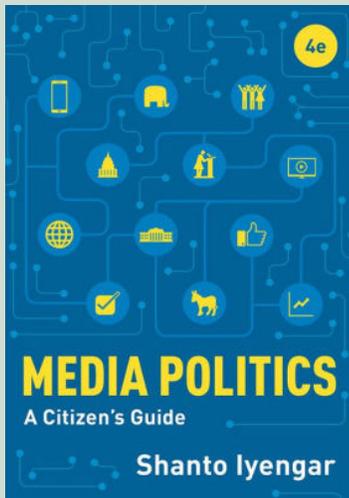
### **Optional:**

While working on your final paper, if you feel like you need more information on the role of media in political and social system, you can refer to this book. It is not required, but you can use it for additional info.

- Campbell, R., Jensen, J., Gomery, D., Fabos, B., & Frechette, J. D. (2014). *Media in society*. Boston, MA and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

## 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 and will be happy to answer any questions about the course, papers, assignments, etc. You can also make an office appointment with me in case you have any questions you would like to discuss.
- This course is administered through Canvas. All assignments will be posted and graded on Canvas, where you will also be able to see feedback on your papers/presentations. Make sure you set up Canvas notifications to stay up to date with the latest announcements and check announcements and your email at least once a week. All updates about course schedule, etc. will be posted on Canvas.



## Final Grade Breakdown

Your final grade in the course will be arrived at through the following combination:

- Class participation and discussion demeanor: 15 points
- Reaction paper 1: 10 points
- Reaction paper 2: 10 points
- TED talk presentation: 20 points
- News story presentation: 20 points
- Final paper: 25 points
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- Maximum possible grade: 100 points

## 5 Course Assignments

[Reaction papers 1 \(due Sept. 24 before class\) and 2 \(due Oct. 29 before class\):](#)

Throughout the course you will have to write two short reaction papers that analyze the readings that were assigned in the previous weeks (see the dates each assignment is due in the course structure). Reaction papers are expected to be 2-3 pages long (excluding reference list) and should be a reflection of your analysis of the reading. Thus, do not just summarize what you've read, but also provide analysis, define unifying elements that connect the readings, add your opinion on the issues, etc. You are also allowed to cite additional articles (both media stories and academic articles available through UF digital library) to broaden the scope of your analysis.

[TED talk assignment \(due Oct. 1, submit your power point slides on Canvas before you present in class\):](#)

You will be required to select and watch three TED talks on the role of media in politics and prepare a short 7-minute presentation summarizing the major points, analyzing the issues raised in those talks, and making conclusions. All students then will present their findings in class (see the date in the course structure).

To make sure that no one else will select the same TED talk, you will need to add the three talks you selected in a list file I will post on Canvas (Google doc link). Thus, when you select your TED talk videos to present on, it is your responsibility to check what others have already added to the list and make sure you are not using the same TED talk in your presentation. Thus, it works on the first come-first serve basis: whoever will start searching for the videos first, will have a bigger selection. If you forgot to check the list or add your selected TED talks to the list so no one knew you work on those, it is your responsibility to make sure you do not present on the same videos that someone else has already added to the list before you. Your presentation should be turned in on Canvas before the class presentations start.

[News stories assignment \(due Nov. 5, submit your power point slides on Canvas before you present in class\):](#)

Select 3-5 recent news stories (those should be extensive analytical stories, not just news briefs) concerned with the recent political affairs (you can determine what issues you are interested in later in the semester, depending on what happens in politics). You will need to prepare a short 7-minute presentation for your classmates where you analyze the issues raised in the stories. You can:

- Find unique and unifying themes in political coverage to show similarities;
- On the contrary, pick bipartisan media outlets and show how different parties look at the same issue;
- Provide your own contextual analysis, using these stories to illustrate your point

Or do all three, depending on the issue - these are just some of the possible directions you could take with your analysis!

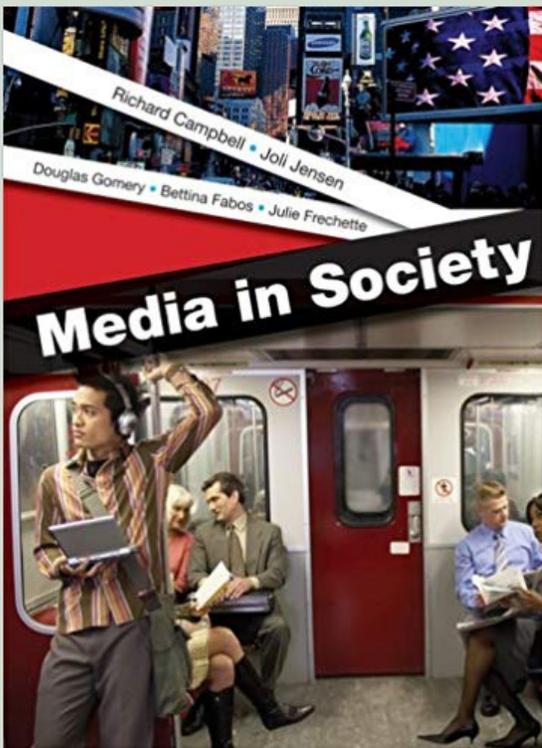
The presentation has to be turned in on Canvas before class presentations start.

[Final paper, \(due Dec. 5 at 11 am\)](#)

Final 8-page long paper on one of the topics that will be offered to you later in the semester. You will be offered several topics to choose from and will need to select ONE to write a final paper on it. Details and topics TBD later in the semester, depending on the political events that will happen in fall.

## All papers must:

- Be written in 12 point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced.
- 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 (APA style).



## All presentations must:

- Be no longer than 7 minutes
- Have at least 3 news stories/TED talks that you present and analyze
- Have your name and the presentation's title on the title slide

## Grading rubrics:

Reaction paper grading rubric (10 points maximum):

Evaluation factor	Points
Logistics: all required readings are covered and the paper meets length requirements	up to 3 points
Clarity and logic, clear structure and conclusion	up to 3 points
Complexity of thought and analysis	up to 3 points
Additional non-required readings covered and cited	1 point

Presentations grading rubric (20 points maximum):

Evaluation factor	Points
Logistics: the necessary number of news stories/TED talks covered, the stories are current and relevant, TED talks are unique and were added to the list in a timely manner, the presentation is no longer than 7 minutes	up to 5 points
Complexity of thought and analysis	up to 6 points
Visual representation – the presentation is well designed and uses illustrations	up to 3 points
Clarity and logic, clear structure and conclusion	up to 6 points

Final paper grading rubric (25 points maximum):

Evaluation factor	Points
Logistics: length requirements, APA style, bibliography, paper relevant to the chosen topic, the paper is well-written and submitted on Canvas on time	5 points maximum
Clarity and logic, clear structure and conclusion	up to 5 points
All the points are illustrated with examples and/or supported by existing literature (both media articles or academic articles)	up to 5 points
Complexity of thought and analysis (the paper goes beyond just summarizing the literature, the author adds her/his own ideas and makes her/his own conclusions)	up to 5 points
Originality of expressed ideas and analysis	up to 5 points

# Course Schedule

DAY	ASSIGNED READINGS	DELIVERABLES
<b>August 27:</b> The role of media in shaping political image.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The syllabus</li> <li>➤ Optional: Campbell et al., Chapter 9</li> </ul>	
<b>September 3</b>	Holiday, no class	
<b>September 10:</b> The Press and the Democratic Process: The American System in Comparative Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 2</li> <li>➤ Optional: Campbell et al., Chapter 5</li> </ul>	
<b>September 17:</b> Where Americans Get the News and How Voters React to News: Historical Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 3</li> <li>➤ <i>Additional articles TBD</i></li> <li>➤ Optional: Campbell et al., Chapter 6</li> </ul>	
<b>September 24:</b> Covering politics in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century – news indexing and news globalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 4</li> <li>➤ Optional: Campbell et al., Chapter 11</li> </ul>	Reaction paper 1 – due before the beginning of class
<b>October 1:</b> TED talk assignment presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ TED talks you selected to present on</li> </ul>	TED talk in-class presentation
<b>October 8:</b> Campaigning and political coverage in the digital era	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 5</li> <li>➤ <i>Additional articles TBD, will be uploaded to Files on Canvas</i></li> <li>➤ Optional: Campbell et al., Chapter 10</li> </ul>	
<b>October 15:</b> The role of media in political campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 6</li> <li>➤ <i>Additional articles TBD</i></li> </ul>	
<b>October 22:</b> The role of media in campaigning, part II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 9</li> <li>➤ <i>Additional articles TBD</i></li> </ul>	
<b>October 29:</b> The role of media in governing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 7</li> </ul>	Reaction paper 2 – due before the beginning of class
<b>November 5:</b> News stories presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The news stories you selected to present on</li> </ul>	News stories in-class presentation

<b>November 12</b>	Holiday, no class	
<b>November 19:</b> News and public opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 8</li> <li>➤ <i>Additional articles TBD</i></li> </ul>	
<b>November 26:</b> Media and politics: existing theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Additional articles TBD</i></li> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 10</li> </ul>	
<b>December 3:</b> Political reporting: what's next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Iyengar, Chapter 11</li> <li>➤ <i>Additional articles TBD</i></li> </ul>	
<b>FINAL PAPER IS DUE DECEMBER 5 AT 11 AM</b>		

## Class Policies:

1. **Deadlines:** All of the deadlines are strict in this course. All assignments will need to be uploaded on Canvas (Turnitin enabled). The system will automatically close the assignment after the deadline, so you can only submit your assignments before the deadline. Under legitimate extenuating circumstances, such as a documented illness, family emergency or other situation that falls under UF deadline extension policies, like a legal or military obligation, athletic participation or religious holiday, I may agree to let you turn in an assignment late. In this cases, please make sure you discuss the issue with assignment completion with me before the deadline. An assignment that has not been submitted or was submitted late will be graded as a zero.

2. **Technical issues:** If you experience any technical difficulties, contact the UF HelpDesk at (352) 392-HELP. If they cannot resolve the problem, then please contact me directly.

3. **Discussion demeanor:** This class is designed to be a platform for energetic discussions and facilitate fun learning activities. In is important to remember that we will be covering sensitive political topics and ones about which some students may have strong feelings. Therefore, you are expected to be courteous and respectful to your fellow classmates. Please be polite to others while both expressing opinions and responding to them. Disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.

4. **Academic Integrity:** University of Florida students live by an honor code that prohibits academic dishonesty such as (but not limited to) cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of sources or information from sources, reusing a paper from another class, writing a similar paper for two classes, drawing too heavily on another's work for your own and having someone else complete your work for you. If you're unsure of whether something constitutes a violation of academic integrity, ask me before turning in an assignment.

Also, please refer to the University of Florida's guidelines regarding academic honesty at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/studentconduct-honor-code/>. Ignorance is not an excuse. An academic integrity violation will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly the entire course, and the instance will be reported to the university's office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

5. **Disability Assistance:** Students with disabilities who seek reasonable accommodations in the classroom or other aspects of performing their coursework must first register with the University of Florida's Disability Resource Center. The center will provide documentation, and then you must meet with me, so appropriate accommodations can be made. The center is in Reid Hall, and you can contact them by calling (352) 392-8565. For more information, visit <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

6. **Student Success and Seeking Help:** College experience can be stressful. You are always encouraged to come to me both inside and outside of class with questions or concerns about this class and your assignments or the communications field in general. Also, the UF Counseling and Wellness Center is a great free resource for any student who could use help managing stress or coping with life. The center, at 3190 Radio Road on campus, is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To make an appointment or receive afterhours assistance, call (352) 392-1575. For more information, visit <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>.

7. **Course Evaluation Process:** I would be glad to get feedback from you on the quality of instruction in this course. This will help me adjust the course to make sure it is challenging but accessible for all the students, and facilitate better learning experiences for all. Because of this, don't hesitate to complete online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> at the end of the semester.