

MMC 6618

Survey of Political Communication

Spring 2020

Thursday 8:30-11:30 (R 2-4), Section 069H

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Office hours: Mondays 2-3 p.m., or by appointment

Phone: 273-4163 (email is generally the fastest way to get a hold of me)

Required Readings

Readings will be posted on Canvas

Course Description

This class is designed to introduce you to the field of political communication. In this course, we will hit on many of the big areas of research in political communication. These include, but are not limited to, the following: agenda-setting, framing, political advertising, entertainment media and politics, political discussion, selective exposure, etc. The topics in this class focus on how structural factors affect the coverage of political issues, how different forms of media affect public opinion about politics, and how people process political messages.

Learning outcomes:

1. Explain how different factors influence political media content.
2. Identify how different mass communication outlets cover political issues, and explain the ways different forms of communication (e.g., media, interpersonal, etc.) affect people's perceptions about politics.
3. Apply theories and research from class to develop new, testable research questions and hypotheses.

Assignments

**A few of the assignments have alternative assignments for undergraduate students who are enrolled. If you are an undergrad and wish to do the PhD level assignment, you are more than welcome to. PhD students, this is an "advanced" course and you must do all assignments as stated.*

Paper/project proposal (25 points): Write a short, two-page summary of what you'll do for the final project. You will then have to meet with me to go over your proposal to obtain final approval on this project idea (generally tied to whether or not it will be do-able within the timeframe of the course).

Journal Review Paper (25 points): For this paper, you will pick an article from class and write up a review of the paper like you would if you were reviewing for a journal. You should submit your review two weeks after we read it in class. Therefore, if you want to review an article from week three, you should submit your review by the end of week five. You need to provide feedback directly to the editor – which is your super blunt assessment of the paper – and

feedback to the authors, which should be much more diplomatic and provide constructive advice as to how to approve the manuscript. Examples of reviews are on Canvas. The paper will be about 1.5 to 2 pages (single spaced) in length.

**Undergrad Alternative: Find an article published in the last two years citing one of the articles we read in class – the article we read in class should be heavily cited in the article you find and be on a similar topic. Provide a brief summary of that article and describe how the new article utilized or built upon the original.*

Short Papers (100 points [2 papers 50 points each])

You must write two proposal papers during the course of the semester. You will pick a week from the course schedule and write a mini proposal for a study you could do based on the week's readings and outside content. The paper should be a brief lit review that leads to testable hypotheses or research questions that could be answered through a research project. An example of this is posted on Canvas.

**Undergrad Alternative: Write two short papers summarizing the readings for a given week, and making connections across the readings. You should also find at least two other relevant articles (not assigned by me) to make connections to.*

In class discussion (50 points)

You will also be graded on your in-class participation. I expect to hear from you each class throughout the semester. You will receive full credit as long as I hear from you several times each week.

Discussion questions (100 points)

You need to select 10 weeks throughout the semester and submit discussion questions for the week's readings. You should submit two questions for each reading. These questions could range from asking about a method used in the paper (e.g., what is a structural equation model?), to questions asking about the theoretical assumptions of the paper. These should be posted on the appropriate Canvas discussion board before 8am on the Tuesday before we discuss the readings.

Discussion leading (100 points)

During the semester, you will be responsible for leading class discussion on two occasions (largely because it's a small class). Each week your classmates have to submit reading questions (see above). These questions are due Tuesday morning. When you lead discussion, it will be your job to compile the questions, come up with your own, and run the discussion for that particular class session. I will be there to chime in when needed, but you will be in charge of moving the conversation along.

**Undergrads – think of me as your co-leader on your weeks. I strongly suggest that you schedule a meeting with me Tuesday or Wednesday prior to your leading days in order for me to help you plan your discussion leading.*

Presentation (50 points): Everyone will make a brief presentation at the end of the semester about their final project. The format will be that of a typical conference presentation (12-15 min in length, followed by Q&A).

Final project (200 points):

Academic paper: You will write a full paper that could be submitted to an academic conference. The study must propose a series of testable hypotheses or propose a series of research questions.

The paper will include a lit review outlining the previous work that has been done on your topic of interest, the method used to conduct the study, a summary of your findings in a result section, and a concluding section summarizing your findings and explaining how they contribute to the existing literature. The paper will be around 15 to 25 pages in length (not including title page, abstract, references, tables, etc. This is 15 to 25 pages of text). **Full papers** must be submitted by the end of the semester. Failure to do so will result in an F. I will NOT accept proposals or incomplete papers.

You may collect your own original data or use secondary data. If you want to collect your own data, you need to get your proposal to me ASAP so you can begin the IRB process.

There are many secondary datasets available to you if you want to use them for your paper this semester. Here's are a few:

1. General social survey - <http://www3.norc.umd.edu/gss+website/>
2. ICPSR- <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/landing.jsp>
3. American National Election Studies - <http://www.electionstudies.org/>
4. National Annenberg Election Survey - <http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/naes/>
5. Roper Center - http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access.html
6. Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Science (TESS)-
<http://www.tessexperiments.org/previousstudies.html>
7. Pew Global Research Attitude Project - <http://www.pewglobal.org/category/datasets/>
8. Eurobarometer - http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm (there are also other 'barometer' data sets such as the Afrobarometer, Arab barometer, and Latino barometer).
9. European Social Survey - <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

**Undergrad alternative: You need to submit a project proposal that includes a literature review, a series of hypotheses or research questions, a proposed method, and a discussion section outlining how your proposal would add to the literature and potential weaknesses of your study. This should be 10-15 pages of text.*

GRADING DISTRIBUTIONS

Total points for the class is 650

A ≥ 93.0%	B+ = 88.0-89.9%	C+ = 78.0-79.9%	D+ = 68.0-69.9%
A- = 90.0-92.9%	B = 83.0-87.9%	C = 73.0-77.9%	D = 60.0-67.9%
	B- = 80.0-82.9%	C- = 70.0-72.9%	F ≤ 59.9%

SELECT COURSE POLICIES

Instructor Interaction

Please feel free to stop by my office during office hours or make an appointment to see me. The best way to reach me is by e-mail. I check my e-mail account regularly, but please do not expect a response by e-mail after normal business hours. If I have not written back within 48 hours, please send your email again. I do not discuss grades or any student records issues via e-mail. Please schedule a meeting with me to discuss these issues. The classroom is typically not an appropriate place for these discussions.

Late or Missed Work

Deadlines for each assignment will be given and students are expected to meet them. Late assignments will automatically lose a full letter grade for each day it is late (e.g. B- to a C-). Some consideration, however, might be given (at the discretion of the instructor) if there are extenuating circumstances such as prolonged hospitalization, family death, or extended individual sickness.

Attendance

This course focuses on class participation and group discussion. Your attendance is an important aspect of this course. Excessive absences will harm your grade. I will deduct 10 percent from your final grade for excessive absences (i.e., missing more than 2 classes).

Email Policy

As a state employee, my email is considered a public record, and can be requested via an open-records request. Because of this, federal privacy laws prevent me from discussing grades or other personal matters via email, and you must visit me in my office to discuss these matters. In general, face-to-face meetings tend to take less time, and result in less confusion than emailed conversations. While you are welcome to email me, I may indicate that you need an in-person meeting depending on the complexity of the issue. Also, please be aware that email is considered formal communication, and it is important to practice professionalism. Make sure that you do not treat email as text (i.e., don't use text abbreviations) and never email something that you would not say to your boss' face.

Honor Code

Please note that all of your work in this class should conform to the university's honor code, which states: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by Students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." For more information please see <http://regulations.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/4.040-1.pdf>

I will document and report all honor code violations, including cheating and plagiarism. The minimum penalty for a violation of the honor code is a zero on the assignment or exam, but may be higher depending on the severity of the violation.

Course Schedule

WEEK Dates	TOPICS (Readings are posted by weekly folder on Canvas and should be read prior to class)
1 1/9	Predicting Elections
2 1/16	Public Opinion
3 1/23	Media Effects Proposal Due
4 1/30	Selective Exposure & Polarization
5 2/6	Misinformation & Corrections
6 2/13	Discussion & Deliberation
7 2/20	Campaigns
8 2/27	Political Advertising
9 3/5	Spring Break – No class
10 3/12	News & Bias
11 3/19	Entertainment
12 3/26	Socialization
13 4/2	Technology
14 4/09	Future of PolCom
15 4/16	Presentations, Final Papers Due