



## MMC 3614 Media & Politics Spring 2024 – 15116 (ASEL)

Instructor: Andrew Selepak, PhD  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, Period 8  
Office: Weimer Hall 3053  
Email: [aselepak@ufl.edu](mailto:aselepak@ufl.edu)

Class: Monday, Period 6 – 8 (12:50 – 3:50)  
Room: Weimer 1074

Course Website: <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>

### **What to expect from MMC 3614:**

The mass media, and specifically the information news media, plays an important role in society. This class will highlight current political trends as they are reported, analyzed and deliberated in our 24/7 news cycle, and how these stories often do not fully or only partially inform the audience. Class topics will examine the growing societal, economic and geopolitical challenges we face, and the news media's responsibility to help ensure we are informed citizens in a representative democracy. The course will emphasize the ways in which politics are shaped by the news media and alternative media, as well as social media – perhaps the strongest influence over society today.

By the end of the semester, students will develop a greater understanding of the role of the media in the political system, and on our daily lives.

### **Course Objectives**

1. Recognize the fundamental role of media in shaping the public's perception of politicians, society, the government, and the political structure.
2. Understand the importance of the Internet and social media and the profound effect it has on media coverage, campaigns, and privacy.
3. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of certain media sources and develop ways to ascertain the validity of information from media sources.
4. Identify how political figures are affected by the media and ways in which political figures respond to, influence, or even manipulate news coverage.
5. Understand how the news media is influenced by advertising, politicians, non-profits, and corporate ownership.
6. Develop a more critical view of news, information, misinformation, and media bias.

### **Required Texts**

There are no required texts for this course. We will be examining the mainstream news media and their coverage of events and stories. No text can be as up to date as real time.

### **Course Materials**

Students will need paper, a writing instruments and a laptop or tablet.

### **Course Philosophy and Expectations**

Mastery in this class requires preparation, passion, and professionalism. Students are expected, within the requirements allowed by university policy, to attend class, be on time, and meet all deadlines. Work assigned should be completed as directed. Full participation in discussions, group projects, and small group activities are required.

My role as instructor is to identify critical issues related to the course, direct students to and teach relevant information, assign appropriate learning activities, create opportunities for assessing student performance and communicate the outcomes of such assessments in a timely, informative, and professional way. Feedback is essential for students to have confidence that they have mastered the material and for the instructor to determine that students are meeting all course requirements.

At all times, it is expected that students will welcome and respond professionally to assessment feedback, that students will treat fellow students, instructors and assistants with respect, and that students will contribute to the success of the class to the best of their abilities.

This class is in-person, and you must log into Canvas with your UF ID and password to access the materials and assignments. The course is organized into modules with due dates.

### **Technical Assistance**

In the event that you have technical difficulties with your course, please contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) either by filling out an [online request form](#) or calling 352-392-4357 - select option 1. The Help Desk is located on the ground floor of the Hub on the UF campus.

If your technical difficulties caused you to miss a due date, you MUST report the problem to the Help Desk and then email your lab instructor. Include the ticket number that you are given from the Help Desk in an email to the instructor to explain the late assignment/quiz/test.

### **IT Support**

For all Technical assistance questions please contact the UF Computing Help Desk:

Phone: 352-392-HELP (4357)

Email: [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu)

### **Please Note**

Your instructor is not able to handle technological issues or answer questions related to computer issues. If a problem of this nature arises that causes you to miss an assignment, you must provide your Help Desk ticket number to the instructor in order to receive an extension.

## **Expectations for Students**

### **Announcements**

You are responsible for reading all announcements posted on Canvas each time you log in.

### **Email**

You are responsible for reading all your course email and responding in a timely manner (within 24 hours).

### **Video Conferencing**

You are responsible for watching all material provided and attending all live meetings. If you cannot attend a meeting, please advise your instructor at least 24 hours in advance (exceptions can be made for legitimate emergencies). You are expected to demonstrate proper netiquette during any online interactions.

### **Course-Related Questions**

Please email your instructor concerning any course-related questions.

## **Instructor's Plan for Classroom Response Time and Feedback**

### **Email Policy**

Except for weekends, holidays, and University breaks, the instructor and/or teaching assistant will typically respond to emails within 48 hours. If you have questions of a personal nature, please email the instructor.

### **Assignment Feedback Policy**

The instructor and/or teaching assistant will provide feedback on submitted assignments within one week of the submission date. Some assignments may require a longer review period, which the instructor will communicate to you.

### **Course-Related Questions Policy**

Except weekends and holidays, the instructor will generally answer questions within 48 hours.

### **Video Conferencing**

The instructor will provide any information on required video meetings within Canvas.

### **In-Class Recording**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving

solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **Electronic Communication Policy**

In addition to the University’s policy, please consider the following:

Privacy, confidentiality, and security in all electronic communications. See [Information Security](#). All electronic communication resources must be used for the course and in alignment with to the CJC Online and University mission. See the [Acceptable Use Policy](#).

Prohibited use of false identity, false identity pseudonyms, or anonymous (sender’s name or electronic identification is hidden).

Prohibited online access without consent.

Prohibited disruption of services including introducing computer contaminants (viruses).

Prohibited [harassment](#) of any kind.

Please see UF’s Information Technology [policies](#) for additional information.

### **Academic Integrity Policy**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.”

The [Student Honor Code](#), Violation of the Student Honor Code, specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to the appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TA in this class.

### **Netiquette**

Due to the casual style of communication commonly found in the online environment, students are sometimes tempted to relax their grammar, word choice, syntax (arrangement of words to create well-formed sentences), writing mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling), and/or professionalism. Keep in mind when communicating with others to be courteous, civil, respectful, and professional. Please remember that you are adult students and professionals—your communication must be appropriate.

### **Attendance Policy**

It is imperative that you meet course deadlines and stay active. If you are experiencing a major illness, absences due to University duties, or other large-scale issues, contact the instructor immediately.

Students are responsible for meeting all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. In general, acceptable reasons for absences include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, military obligation, [severe weather conditions](#), [religious holidays](#), and participation in official University activities. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. [Excused absences](#) must be consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation. For additional information, see the [attendance policies](#).

### **Software Use**

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

### **Notification to Students of FERPA Rights**

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see:

<http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html>.

### **Online Meeting Etiquette**

Video conferencing is an excellent tool to interface with your peers and instructor(s) but there are also netiquette expectations to ensure that all participants are respected and treated with civility. Please make sure that you follow all of the netiquette and etiquette expectations including the following:

Be punctual and courteous.

Position your camera at eye level with good lighting.

Show respect and professionalism by dressing business casual or business professional.

Make sure your background is in a proper setting with minimal distractions.

Mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

### **Writing Style**

In order to meet the academic rigor and standards of UF, all students are required to use the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) 7<sup>th</sup> Edition style in their courses. The APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Manual has a plethora of guidelines that includes scholarly writing, publishing principles, elements and format for your papers, writing style and grammar, bias-free language guidelines, mechanics of style, in-text citing and references, etc. For additional information on notable changes, see [changes between APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition and APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition](#).

### **Academic Resources**

[One UF Student Portal](#) – Course registration, final grades, transcript requests, degree audit.

[GatorRater](#) – Online faculty evaluations and results.

UF Bookstore: Phone: 352-392-0194, Email: [ufbookstore@bsd.ufl.edu](mailto:ufbookstore@bsd.ufl.edu)

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

UF Library Services for Distance Students

Ask a Librarian – chat with librarians online.

CJC Librarian - April Hines, Phone: 352-273-2728, Email: [aprhone@uflib.ufl.edu](mailto:aprhone@uflib.ufl.edu).

Course Reserves: Electronic resource reserve items that can be accessed via links or files.

Teaching Center: General study skills and tutoring. Broward Hall, Phone: 352-392-2010 or 352-392-6420.

Writing Studio: Provides one-on-one consultations and workshops tailored to specific classes (graduate and undergraduate). 302 Tigert Hall, Phone: 352-846-1138.

On-Line Student Complaints: This process is designed to make every attempt to resolve student complaints within its academic and administrative departments at the program level.

Information for Veterans: Veterans Affairs Certification: Phone: 352 - 294-2948

## **Student Resources**

Distant Student Resources: Phone: 352-392-1265

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or Phone: 352-294-2273 so that a team member can reach out.

Counseling and Wellness Center: [3190 Radio Road, Gainesville, FL 32611](#)  
[Phone: \(352\) 392-1575](#), [Fax: \(352\) 273-4738](#)

Sexual Violence Response: Victim services, Care Area, UF Police Department, and Title IX.

University Police Department: Resources available include the Office of Victim Services and Community Services Division. Emergency: 9-1-1; Non-Emergency: 352-392-1111.

Academic Planning: Academic advisors that can refer you to the wide array of resources that are available to UF students.

Gator Connect: Online database of student organizations.

Career Connection Center: Career assistance and counseling. Reitz Union, Phone: 352-392-1601.

**Veteran Services:** Office of Student Veteran Services, Phone: 352-294-2948, email: [vacounselor@ufl.edu](mailto:vacounselor@ufl.edu). Collegiate Veterans Success Center, Phone: 352- 294-7215, email: [charlotte.kemper@va.gov](mailto:charlotte.kemper@va.gov).

**Student Financial Affairs:** Financial aid counseling including Aid-a-Gator program. Phone: 352-392-1275.

**Student Success Coach:** Meet with a graduate student coach that can support you in numerous ways during your time in graduate school, such as time and stress management, motivation, organization, and much more.

### **Course Measurement Breakdown**

Students' progress in this course will be evaluated according to the following distribution:

Assessments	
Weekly Discussion Paper	25%
Class Discussion	20%
Exams (2 Total)	20%
Media Bias Presentation	15%
Final Presentation	20%

Your grades will be posted to Canvas at <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>

### **Grading Scale**

A (93-100)	B (83-86)	C (73-76)	D (63-66)
A- (90-92)	B- (80-82)	C- (70-72)	D- (60-62)
B+ (87-89)	C+ (77-79)	D+ (67-69)	E (Below 60)

The university policies concerning this grading scale can be found at:

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

### **Course work**

This course is comprised of weekly papers, class discussions, assignments, and exams. Students are expected to attend all lectures and contribute to class discussions and assignments using examples drawn from professional experience, personal experience, and course content. Students are expected to complete course assignments on time based on rubrics provided. Lastly, a final group project, due at the end of the semester, will measure students' understanding of the impact of alternative media in our understanding of politics, culture, and society.

### **Lectures**

Although this is a discussion-based course, there will be times when the instructor will lecture in class. These lectures are intended to provide students with a base of understanding that will assist in class discussions.

### Exams

Exams will be held in class. Students will need a laptop and the Lockdown Browser for both exams. Both exams will be essay format based on class discussions and class content.

### Weekly Discussion Paper

Each week, students will be presented with a topic in class. Students will research the topic and then discuss what was learned. Students will then complete a weekly discussion paper of what they knew about the topic before it was discussed in class, what they learned in class during the discussion, and how this new knowledge informs their perceptions of the news, politics, society, and culture. Students will submit their Weekly Discussion Paper in Canvas by the end of the day of class.

### Late Work Policy

Students are expected to complete assignments by the day they are scheduled.

More information on the university's policies on late work can be found at:

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

Submitting Weekly Discussion Papers late will be subject to the following late penalties:

Point Deduction	Duration of Lateness
5 Points	Less than an hour
10 Points	Greater than one (1) hour but less than 24 hours
15 Points	Greater than 24 hour but less than 48 hours
25 Points	Greater than 48 hours but less than one (1) week
Not Accepted	Greater than one (1) week

### Class Discussion

Each week, the class will watch news clips from alternative news media. Students will be required to debate and discuss the stories in class and how they differ from the coverage from mainstream media. This will require students to stay up to date with the news outside the classroom (it is recommended that students use X (Twitter) to also stay informed on news topics and discussions. Students are required to be respectful of others in all discussions. Failure to respect others in all class discussions will result in point deductions on the assignment. To receive full credit in weekly class discussions, students must make thoughtful and rational contributions to the discussion.

### Absences

All students who miss class for any reason will need to complete a 3-5 minute presentation during the following class that covers the Weekly Discussion Topic that was missed. The 3-5 minute presentation on the Weekly Discussion Topic from the missed class will take the place of both the Weekly Discussion Topic grade and the Class Discussion grade.

Upon completing the 3-5 minute presentation of the previous week's Weekly Discussion Topic, the class will vote on the presentation. Presentations must be approved by at least 75% of the



class to receive full credit. Students who receive below a 75% approval rate from their classmates will receive a score on their presentation equivalent to the percentage of students who approve of their overall presentation on the topic.

In addition, excused absences will receive full credit for the 3-5 minute presentation for both the Weekly Discussion Topic grade and the Class Discussion grade, if they receive above 75% approval from the class. Unexcused absences will result in a 10-point penalty on the overall grade if they receive above 75% approval from the class or a 10-point penalty from the final grade after voting.

### **Media Bias Presentation**

This group project will require students to examine how a specific media story is presented by three different mainstream partisan media outlets. Students will deliver a presentation to the class explaining how the story is presented differently by each outlet and the implications for these different presentations for audiences.

Specific details about the assignment are provided within the "Assignments Tab" of Canvas.

### **Final Presentation**

This group project will require students to present an alternative news media source to the class. Students will deliver a presentation to the class providing background on the alternative media source, analysis on the source's coverage of news stories, and explain how the audience for this alternative media source may have a different understanding of politics, society, and culture. Specific details about the assignment are provided within the "Assignments Tab" of Canvas.

### **Course Policies**

#### **Incompletes**

A course grade of incomplete will be permitted only for serious illness documented by a physician. A timetable for completing the course work must be set before the incomplete is given.

#### **Courtesy.**

If you arrive late to lecture or lab, settle in with minimum disturbance. Put your cell phone on vibrate. **DO NOT TAKE PHOTOS DURING THE CLASS OF**

**POWERPOINTS OR OTHER MATERIAL**. First, this can be distracting to the instructor. Second, if you are only taking photos of the lecture material, you are not processing the information and you will not learn it. This may prevent you from doing well on exams.

Be courteous and respectful of fellow students during all class discussions and debates.

#### **Flexibility**

We believe the semester plan outlined in the calendar is realistic. Nonetheless, the instructor reserves the right to adjust the course content, exercises, exams, etc., based on the class's collective ability to maintain pace.

### **Attendance**

Requirements for class attendance, exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies unless specifically stated within this syllabus. These university policies can be found in the online catalog at:

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

### **University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities**

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

Students with Disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. DRC is located in room 001 in Reid Hall or you can contact them by phone at 352-392-8565.

### **University counseling services and mental health services**

Counseling and Wellness resources

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

352-392-1575

### **Netiquette: Communication Courtesy**

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. <http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

### **U Matter, We Care**

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575.

The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength.

In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

### **Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period

opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **University Policy on Academic Misconduct**

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2018/08/The-Orange-Book-Web.pdf>

The University of Florida Honor Code reads as follows:

The Honor Pledge: 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.”

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

All students in the College of Journalism and Communications are expected to conduct themselves with the highest degree of integrity. It is the students’ responsibility to ensure that they know and understand the requirements of every assignment. At a minimum, this includes avoiding the following:

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism occurs when an individual presents the ideas or expressions of another as his or her own. Students must always credit others’ ideas with accurate citations and must use quotation marks and citations when presenting the words of others.

**Cheating:** Cheating occurs when a student circumvents or ignores the rules that govern an academic assignment such as an exam or class paper. It can include using notes, in physical or electronic form, in an exam, submitting the work of another as one’s own, or reusing a paper a student has composed for one class in another class. If a student is not sure about the rules that govern an assignment, it is the student’s responsibility to ask for clarification from his instructor.

**Misrepresenting Research Data:** The integrity of data in mass communication research is a paramount issue for advancing knowledge and the credibility of our professions. For this reason, any intentional misrepresentation of data, or misrepresentation of the conditions or circumstances of data collection, is considered a violation of academic integrity. Misrepresenting data is a clear violation of the rules and requirements of academic integrity and honesty.

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Florida Code of Conduct <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>

## **Course Calendar**

**\*\*\*\*NOTE: schedule subject to change based on availabilities and other factors.**

### **Week Zero – 1/5**

Introduction to course

### **Week One – 1/8**

Lecture: The News Media  
Class Discussion on Weekly Topic

### **Week Two – 1/15**

No Class – MLK Day

### **Week Three – 1/22**

Class Discussion on Weekly Topic  
Class Discussion of Alternative Media

Instructor will split the class into groups for the Media Bias Presentation and Final Presentation

### **Week Four – 1/29**

Class Discussion on Weekly Topic  
Class Discussion of Alternative Media

### **Week Five – 2/5**

Class Discussion on Weekly Topic  
Class Discussion of Alternative Media

### **Week Six – 2/12**

Class Discussion of Alternative Media

Media Bias Presentations

### **Week Seven – 2/19**

Class Discussion of Alternative Media

Media Bias Presentations

**Week Eight – 2/26**

Class Discussion on Weekly Topic  
Class Discussion of Alternative Media

**Week Nine – 3/4**

Class Discussion of Alternative Media

Exam One

**Week Ten – 3/11**

No Class – Spring Break

**Week Eleven – 3/18**

Class Discussion on Weekly Topic  
Class Discussion of Alternative Media

**Week Twelve: 3/25**

Class Discussion on Weekly Topic  
Class Discussion of Alternative Media

**Week Thirteen – 4/1**

Class Discussion on Weekly Topic  
Class Discussion of Alternative Media

Final Project Presentation

**Week Fourteen – 4/8**

Class Discussion on Weekly Topic  
Class Discussion of Alternative Media

Final Project Presentation

**Week Fifteen – 4/15**

Class Discussion on Weekly Topic  
Class Discussion of Alternative Media

**Week Sixteen – 4/22**

Class Discussion of Alternative Media

Exam Two