MEDIA AND POLITICS

POS 4931

Spring 2013

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How powerful is the American media and what forms does its power take? How has the media evolved over time? How do newspapers, TV, talk radio, and the Internet influence the political opinions and political behavior of citizens and the actions of the government? Is the media biased in a liberal or a conservative direction? How does the media cover political institutions, campaigns, domestic politics, and foreign policy? How do journalists write about the president, Congress, the Supreme Court, and American military interventions in places like Afghanistan and Iraq? Why is the media criticized for the way it covers politics, and what might be done differently?

This course aims to address these questions. The focus of the course is on the mainstream media (e.g. the New York Times, ABC News, NBC News, CBS News), but attention will also be paid to newer and non-mainstream forms of media such as talk radio, political comedy shows, and “soft news”. Roughly the first half of the course will focus on media coverage of domestic politics. The second half will focus on the media and foreign policy, particularly with regard to coverage of war. Films, and possibly outside speakers, will supplement course readings.

Required Texts: on sale at UF bookstores

3. Robert Entman, Projections of Power, University of Chicago, 2004
4. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, Pantheon Books, 2002

There is also a coursepack containing required readings that are not in the required texts. This will be available for purchase at Orange and Blue Textbooks (OBT) at 309 NW 13th Street.

The assignments for the course include two writing assignments and one exam. The first written assignment, on media bias, is due on Feb 14. The second,
on media coverage of foreign affairs, is due on April 23. Each paper should be
approximately 10 pages long. I will not accept email versions of your paper. You must
hand in a hard copy. Details on the topics and an explanation of how to write the papers
will be emailed to the class list serve.

The exam will be multiple choice. It will be on March 19. A study guide will be
emailed to the class list serve roughly 2 weeks before the exam.

To write each paper, you will need to do the course readings for a particular topic
and also read at least three newspaper articles. The aim of the papers is two-fold: 1) to
show that you understand the academic literature on a particular topic—such as media
bias—and 2) to apply the literature to actual media coverage. Thus we will be not only
studying what scholars say about the media, but also looking for ourselves to evaluate
what the media says about politics.

The breakdown of points for the course is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Papers (2, worth 30 points each)</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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GRADES:

- A 90
- B 80-84.1
- C 69.7-73.8
- D 60-64.1
- A- 86.6-89.9
- B- 77-79.9
- C- 66.7-69.8
- D- 57-59.9
- B+ 84.2-86.5
- C+ 73.9-76.9
- D+ 64.2-66.6
- E Below 57

In writing the essays, you should pay attention both to the content of the paper—the points you are making, the evidence you use—and to spelling, grammar, and
punctuation. When writing papers, make sure to use the spell-check function on your
computer and PROOFREAD the entire document. Spell-checking alone will not catch all
mistakes, e.g. "their" instead of "there", "to" instead of "too". These will not be identified
as wrong because they are words spelled properly but misused. If you are unsure about
decisions such as whether and how to use an apostrophe, colon, or semi-colon, there are
numerous sources available, e.g. Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Term Papers or
Student’s Guide for Writing College Papers (I recommend buying one of these for your
personal library while at UF). Papers that contain numerous spelling, punctuation, or
grammatical errors will receive a lower grade than they would have otherwise. Late
papers will be penalized unless the student has a valid reason for handing a given paper in
after the deadline. Medical and other excuses will require documentation.

You should come to class having done the readings and be prepared to discuss
what you think of them. Are the arguments compelling? Or are they not convincing?
What is missing from the authors’ accounts, if anything? What else might they consider?
The success of the class will depend on your willingness to engage the readings, to think
about them critically, and to come ready to share your thoughts with your fellow students. The class will consist of a mixture of lecture and discussion. We will do some work in small groups in which students will discuss the course readings and what you found while writing your papers. The groups will present their conclusions to the class, but a “spokesperson” will be chosen by each group so nobody will be forced to do public speaking if you do not want to. However, I strongly encourage students to speak up all times – ask questions, make comments, share your reactions and ideas. This will make class more interesting for you and for everyone else.

Plagiarism (using someone else's ideas without assigning credit to the source) is a serious offense. Students must abide by the University of Florida's Student Code of Conduct. Cheating on exams and plagiarism violate the standards of the university and will be addressed seriously.
January 8

Introduction and Course Overview

January 10 and 15

History of the Media

Required Readings
* Darrell West reading, The Rise and Fall of the Media Establishment, pp. 8-23, 26-38, 42-55 (Item #1 in coursepack)
* Larry Sabato reading, Feeding Frenzy (Lanahan: 2000), pp. 18-31 (Item #2 in coursepack)
* Graber, Media Power in Politics, Ch. 33, required text
* James Fallows, “Learning to Love the (Shallow, Divisive, Unreliable) New Media,” The Atlantic, April 2011, on evolution of the media: read from p. 5 of online version starting with “”The news business has never been stable…” online at http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/04/learning-to-love-the-shallow-divisive-unreliable-new-media/8415/#.UCb4_xcT2j4.email

***NO CLASS JANUARY 17***

January 22 and 24

Agenda-setting, priming and framing: What influence does the media have on the public and on policy-makers?

Required Readings
* Graber, Media Power in Politics, Chs. 7, 10, required text
* W. Russell Neumann, Marion R. Just and Ann N. Crigler reading, Common Knowledge, pp. 60-77 (Item #4 in coursepack).

January 29 and 31, February 5

Media Bias: Is the media biased in a liberal way, a conservative way, a mix of both, or something else?

Required Readings
* Bernard Goldberg, Bias, chs. 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, required textbook
* Jim Kuypers reading, Press Bias and Politics, pp.27-52, 119-46 (Items #7 and 8 in coursepack).
* Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, pp. 1-35, required text

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In class video: Fear and Favor in the Newsroom

February 7 and 12
The Media and Political Institutions: How Does the Media Cover Domestic Politics and Policy?

Required Readings
* Rozell and Mayer, Media Power, Media Politics, chapters 1 and 2 (Item #7 in coursepack)
* In class handout on Supreme Court
* Graber, Media Power in Politics, Chapters 7, 20, 21, required text

FEBRUARY 14: Papers on bias due and class discussion of papers and what you found

February 19 and 21
Media Coverage of Scandal: Beating a Dead Horse or Conveying Information the Public Needs To Know?

Required Readings
* Kalb, “I Mean the Man is Just a Pervert,” pp. 18-35 of One Scandalous Story (Item #8 in coursepack).
* Isikoff reading, pp. 260-275 of Uncovering Clinton (Item #9 in coursepack).
* Robert Entman, Scandal and Silence, two chapters (Item #10 in coursepack)
In class discussion of more recent scandals

February 26 and 28
The Media and Elections: How Does the Media Cover Political Campaigns, and What’s Wrong With This Coverage?

Required Readings
* Graber required text: Chs 15, 18,
* Farnsworth and Lichter reading, Nightly News Nightmare (Item #11 in coursepack).
* Graber chapters 14, 13, 17 (read in that order)

March 12, 14
New Media: The Internet, Blogs, Talk Radio and Other Non-Mainstream Media

Required Readings
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*David Barker and Kathleen Knight, “Political Talk Radio and Public Opinion,” Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Summer 2000), pp. 149-170 (Available through UF library website)

March 19 EXAM (on all material up to now, EXCEPT for material on media bias, which will not be on the test)

March 21, 26
Media Coverage of Foreign Policy I:

Required Readings
*Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, Chapter 2 and 3 of Manufacturing Consent, required text
*Robert Entman, Projections of Power, pp. 1-17 and Chapter 2, required text

March 28, April 2
Media Coverage of War I

Required Readings
*Graber, required text, Ch 34 (censorship in war)
*Graber, required text, Ch. 27 (on sanitization of war coverage)
* Herman and Chomsky, Ch. 5, Required text

April 4, 9
Case studies of US military endeavors abroad

Required Readings
Entman book, chapters  3-5, Required text
Graber, Ch. 11, required text
Additional readings TBA
April 11 and 16

Comparing News Coverage of War and Terrorism By Different Outlets:

Required Readings


*Amy E. Jasperson and Mansour O. El-Kikhia, “CNN and al Jazeera’s Media Coverage of America’s War in Afghanistan,” in Pippa Norris et al., Framing Terrorism (Routledge, 2003), pp. 113-132 (Coursepack)


***NO CLASS APRIL 18 (TIME TO WRITE) ***

APRIL 23: SECOND PAPER DUE AND DISCUSS PAPERS IN CLASS