

MEDIA AND POLITICS

POS 4931

Spring 2020

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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

1. Doris Graber, ed., Media Power in Politics, 6th edition, CQ Press: 2010
2. Bernard Goldberg, Bias: A CBS Insider Exposes How The Media Distort the News, Perennial Publishers: 2003
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 Bookit, 1250 West University Avenue (ph 371-9588).

The assignments for the course include three writing assignments, one quiz and one exam. Attendance is also worth 10 points. If you attend all the classes, you get 100 percent of the points, or 10 points. If you attend half the classes, you get 50 percent of the points, or 5 points. I give everyone two free absences, in addition to any excused absences.

The first written assignment is a short (under five pages) paper, due Jan. 23. The second is a longer (10-12 pages) paper on media bias, is due on February 27.

The third paper on media coverage of foreign affairs (7 to 9 pages) is due on April 26 (you can hand it in as early as April 21, the last day of class). Details on the topics and an explanation of how to write the papers will be emailed to the class list serve.

To write each paper, you will need to do the course readings for a particular topic and also read several 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 quiz and exam will be multiple choice/true-false questions. A study guide will be emailed to the class list serve roughly 2 weeks before the quiz and the exam.

The breakdown of points for the course is (out of 100 points):

| | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----|---|----|
| Paper 1 (due January 25) | = | 13% | = | 13 |
| points | | | | |
| Quiz (February 8) | = | 10% | = | 10 |
| points | | | | |
| Paper 2 (March 1) | = | 26% | = | 26 |
| points | | | | |
| Exam (April 7) | = | 20% | = | 20 |
| points | | | | |
| Paper 3 (Due April 21-26) | = | 26% | = | |
| 26 points | | | | |
| Attendance | = | 5% | = | 5 |
| points | | | | |

GRADES:

A 90 and above B 80-83 C 70-73 D 60-63

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| A- 87-89 | B- 77-79 | C- 67-69 | D- 57-59 |
| B+ 84-86 | C+ 74-76 | D+ 64-66 | E 56 or below |

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.

POLICIES AND RELATED INFORMATION

Persons with Disabilities: Students requesting accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office Disability Resource Center (<https://drc.dso.ufl.edu/students/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must

then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Anyone with a disability should feel free to see me during office hours to make the necessary arrangements.

Policies on Attendance, Cell Phones, and Laptops Since class discussions and lectures often add new concepts, ideas, and interpretations that students will be responsible for knowing, it is in your best interest to attend every class and to arrive on time. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Policy on Cheating 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. 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."

The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-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 appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

In the event that a student is found cheating, s/he will automatically fail the course and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs.

Counseling and Mental Health: Counseling Phone numbers and contact sites for university counseling services and mental Health Services can be found at <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx> or you may call 3921575. To contact the University Police Department call 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

January 7
Introduction and Course Overview

January 9, 14
History of the Media and Media Roles Over Time

January 11: Media Prior to the 20th Century – Partisan Press, Penny Press, Yellow Journalism, Journalism and Objectivity

Required Reading

*Darrell West reading, The Rise and Fall of the Media Establishment, pp. 8-23, 26-38, 42-55 (Item #1 in coursepack)

January 16
Media as a Force For and Against Social Change

Required Reading

*Rodger Streitmatter, Mightier Than The Sword (Westview Press, 2012), Chapter 3, Chapter 4, and Ch. 11 up to p. 167 (To be emailed to class list serve)

January 21
Media as Lapdog, Watchdog, Junkyard Dog, and Comparison to Media in Other Countries

Required Reading

* Larry Sabato reading, Feeding Frenzy (Lanahan: 2000), pp. 18-31 (Item #2 in coursepack)
*Thomas E. Patterson reading, "Political Roles of the Journalist," in The Politics of News: The News of Politics, ed. Doris Graber, Denis McQuail and Pippa Norris (Congressional Quarterly Press, 1998), pp. 17-32 (Item #3 in coursepack)

January 23: SHORT PAPER ON STREITMATTER READING DUE (topic to be emailed to list serve two weeks before paper is due)

January 28
Agenda-setting, priming and framing: what influence or effect do the media have on the public and on policy-makers?

Required Readings

* Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder, News That Matters (University of Chicago Press: 2010), pp. 16-33 and 63-72 (to be emailed to list serve)

January 30: Media Effects, Continued

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).

FEBRUARY 4: QUIZ ON ALL MATERIAL UP TO READINGS FOR JAN. 30 AND EXCEPTING STREITMATTER WHICH YOU WROTE A PAPER ON

February 6

Conservative Bias and Corporate Media

Required Readings

*Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent, pp. 1-35, required text
*Eric Alterman reading, What Liberal Media?, p. 14-44 (Items #5 and 6 in coursepack)
*Sheelah Kolhatkar, "The Growth of Sinclair's Conservative Media Empire," New Yorker Magazine, October 22, 2018, available at https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/22/the-growth-of-sinclairs-conservative-media-empire?mbid=social_twitter&fbclid=IwAR0BPGa73mkuD28YwCRfa9ka0h40XUg_-oym4bavOGRXStwuIKC8ThiQDnw

February 11

Liberal Bias at CBS and Elsewhere

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)

February 13

No Bias

Required Readings

*David Niven, "Bias in the News: Partisanship and Negativity in Media Coverage of Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton," International Journal of Press/Politics, July 2001, vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 31-46 (available through UF library website)
* Adam Schiffer, Evaluating Media Bias (To be emailed to class list serve)

February 18, 20

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

Required Reading

* Rozell and Mayer, Media Power, Media Politics, chapters 1 and 2 (Items #9 and 10 in coursepack)

February 25

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

Required Readings

*Isikoff, "I Mean the Man is Just a Pervert," pp. 18-35 of One Scandalous Story (Item #12 in coursepack).

*Kalb reading, pp. 260-275 of Uncovering Clinton (Item #13 in coursepack).

* Robert Entman, scandal and silence, two chapters (Item #14 in coursepack)

FEBRUARY 27: PAPER ON BIAS DUE AND CLASS DISCUSSION OF YOUR PAPERS

SPRING BREAK MARCH 3 and 5

March 10, 12

The Media and Elections: How Does Traditional Media (Broadcast TV and Mainstream Print Media) Cover Political Campaigns? And What's Wrong With This Coverage? What Effect Does Media Coverage Have on Election Outcomes?

March 10:

Required Readings

*Graber required text: Chs 15, 18.

* Dylan Matthews, "A Stunning new study shows that Fox News is more powerful than we ever imagined." September 8, 2017, at

<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/8/16263710/fox-news-presidential-vote-study>

March 12:

Required Readings

* Graber chapters 14, 13.

*Reading by Thomas Patterson on Media Coverage of the 2016 general election.

At <http://σηορενσταινγεντερ.οργ/νεωσ-χοπεραγε-2016-γενεραλ-ελεχτιον/>

March 17, 19:

New Media: Talk Radio, Late Night Comedy, Blogs, Soft News, and Social Media

March 17:

Required Readings

* Rodger Streitmatter, Mightier Than The Sword (Westview: 2012), reading on Rush Limbaugh (to be emailed to list serve)

*Jody Baumgartner and Jonathan Morris, "The Daily Show Effect: Candidate Evaluations, Efficacy, and American Youth," American Politics Research, May 2006, 34: 341-367 (Available through UF library website)

* Graber, chapter 24 on blogs

March 19:

Required Readings

* Graber, Media Power in Politics, Chapter 9, required text

* The Omidyar Group, "Is Social Media a Threat to Democracy?" October 1, 2017, available at <https://www.omidyargroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Social-Media-and-Democracy-October-5-2017.pdf>

March 24, 26: No readings

March 31:

Media Coverage of Foreign Policy: Theories

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

April 2

Start: Media Coverage of War: Amateur Journalism and Censorship

Required Readings

* Graber, Media Power in Politics, Chapter 6 on amateur journalism, chapter 34 on censorship in war (required text)

APRIL 7: EXAM (See Study Guide For Material Covered)

April 9:
Media Coverage of War Continued: Sanitization of War and Embedded Reporting

Required Readings

* Graber, Media Power in Politics, chapter 27 on sanitization of war coverage (required text)
* Michel M. Haigh, "A Comparison of Embedded and Non-embedded Print Coverage of the U.S. Invasion and Occupation of Iraq," International Journal of Press and Politics, April 2006, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 139-153 (Available through UF Library Website)

April 14:
Case Studies of Military Endeavors Abroad: Vietnam

Required Readings

☒ Herman and Chomsky, Ch. 5, Required text

April 16
Case Studies of Military Endeavors Abroad Continued: Grenada, Panama, Libya, Iraq, Syria

Required Reading

* Entman book, chapters 3-4, Required text

April 21
Comparing News Coverage of the Same War by Different Countries' Media Outlets:

Required Readings

* Sean Aday, Steven Livingston, and Maeve Hebert, "Embedding the Truth: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Objectivity and Television Coverage of the Iraq War," The International Journal of Press/Politics, January 2005, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 3-21 (Available through UF Library website)

APRIL 21-26: SECOND PAPER DUE (you can submit this in as early as April 21 and as late as April 26)