

**Media and Politics**  
**PSCI 4341-001**  
**12-12:50 MWF MUEN E113**  
**Spring 2016**  
Instructor: Dr. Janet Donovan  
Office hours: 10:30-11:30 MW, 2-3 M  
Office: Ketchum 219  
Email: [janet.donavan@colorado.edu](mailto:janet.donavan@colorado.edu)  
Office phone: 303.492.6812

**Course Description:** This course examines aspects of political communication as it applies to citizens, political decision makers, and specific public policies.

Using the readings and connecting with current and past media content, we will examine the role of the media in the political process from a variety of perspectives. We will use course readings, available electronically on D2L, to explore three major themes. First, we will examine the media as a set of political institutions. Second, we will explore the roles of the media in political behavior in the United States generally. Finally, we will examine the roles of the news media in U.S. elections in particular.

In addition to the readings, students will be keeping a diary of news media usage over the course of the semester, and we will use the media diaries as a way of building media literacy. We will engage in several group activities exploring ideas from the course. And, each student write a literature review and give a presentation covering a particular topic in media and politics, utilizing academic journal articles and books.

Using these disparate ways of understanding the scholarship of political communication and the practice of using media content to make political decisions, we will try to come to a deeper understanding of the role of the media in the American political process.

This class will include a small amount of lecture most class periods to set up the discussion, but most of the class will be discussion. Please make sure that you have carefully read the material for the day in order to be ready to work through our discussion questions. And, do remember to take notes on the discussions as well as the lecture portion, as a lot of the important ideas in the class will be worked through in discussions.

This is an American Politics course and may be counted toward PSCI American Field credit.

**Course Objectives:**

- 1) Learn about key ideas and concepts in political communication scholarship through reading the textbooks, participating in class lectures and discussions, creating annotated bibliographies and writing literature reviews
- 2) Compare the role of the media in the US political process to other similar types of systems
- 3) Understand the many ways the media participate in the US political system
- 4) Build understanding of academic research and scholarship in political communication
- 5) Improve critical thinking skills in applying ideas from academic research to everyday media use and political understanding
- 6) Enhance writing and research skills through the annotated bibliographies and papers
- 7) Improve media literacy by becoming more conscious of our media choices

**Grading:**

Media Diary	15 points
Group Activities	10 points
Midterm Exam	20 points
Literature Review	15 points
Presentation	5 points
Attendance/Participation	15 points
Final Exam	20 points
Total	100 points

**Scale:**

93-100	A
90-92	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
78-79	C+
73-77	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
≤ 59	F

**Required texts:**

Readings and reading schedule provided on D2L

**Course Requirements:**

**Media Diary:** Each student is required to choose a day of the week, and to keep a media diary for that same day each week. In the media diary, you should keep track of every source of news you consume over the course of the day, and make note of any stories or aspects of the way the news is reported are of particular interest, or that connect to course material. Over the course of the semester, we will examine how media habits in the class have stayed the same and changed, and we will evaluate how closely the information we are reading in the news compares to the concepts and ideas we are reading about in class. These diaries will be posted in the discussion board on D2L, so they are something that other students will be reading and commenting on as well. We will also use

them as a source of information and discussion in class. And, I will also be keeping one! Media diaries should be turned in each week starting in week 2, and are worth 1 point per week for a total of 15 points.

**Group Activities:** We will engage in several group activities over the course of the semester, including both in-class and online activities. Activities will be announced in class and by email and on D2L. Group activities are a total of 10 points of the semester grade.

**Midterm Exam:** The midterm exam will consist of a combination of term identifications, short essays and long essays in an in-class blue book exam. All students must take the midterm exam in class on Friday, March 4. More information on the format of the exam will be given later in the semester, and a study guide will be provided the class period before the exam. The exam is worth 20 points of the final grade and is required to receive a passing grade in the course. Make-up exams will be given only in cases of documented medical or family emergency, religious observances or university absences related to participation in university-sanctioned activities. If it is physically possible, the instructor must be notified in advance of such an emergency. All make-ups are at the instructor's discretion and would be in a different format than the original.

**Literature Review/Presentation:** Students will choose a research question and write an 8-10 page literature review on the question, worth 15 points of the final grade. Students will then present the paper in class, valued at 5 points. More information on the literature review and paper will be provided later in the semester. The paper is due Friday, March 18 in class. Presentations will be scheduled in class on Wednesdays on the dates March 30 and April 6, 13 & 20.

**Participation/Attendance:** Students are required to be in class each day and to participate in class discussions. Because this is an upper-division class that encourages and requires students to work through the ideas and material, the class cannot be successful without your attendance and participation. Attendance will be taken in class each day, and students will be penalized for more than 2 unexcused absences. Participation will also be noted and graded qualitatively. Please keep in mind that not all talking is going to enhance your participation grade, and that participating cannot make up for lack of attendance or vice versa. The best way to earn the attendance and participation points is to be in class every day with the readings completed and ready to discuss. Attendance and participation are worth a total of 15 points.

**Final Exam:** All students must take the final exam at the assigned time of Sunday, May 1 from 4:30-7 in the regular classroom. The final will consist of term identifications and essay questions in a blue book exam. One essay question will be comprehensive; the rest of the exam will cover material since the midterm. More information on the format of the exam will be given later in the semester. The exam is worth 25 points of the final grade and is required to receive a passing grade in the course. Make-up finals will be given only in cases of documented medical or family emergency, religious observances or university absences related to participation in university-sanctioned activities, or with documentation of a final exam time conflict in accordance with CU policy. Again, if it is physically possible, the instructor must be notified in advance of such an emergency. All make-ups are at the instructor's discretion and would be in a different format than the original.

## **Course Policies:**

**Course communications:** Email is the official mode of communication for the University of Colorado at Boulder. Students are required to regularly check their @colorado.edu email (at least every 48 hours) for updates regarding the course. Students are responsible for receiving any messages sent by the instructor to the class email list, or individually to the student. Students are responsible for ensuring that any email sent by the student to the instructor is received. In addition, students are responsible for checking the D2L site for the course regularly, and for completing any assignments on D2L on time.

**Contacting the Instructor:** Please feel free to contact me with questions about the course. The best ways to reach me are to come by office hours, or to email. You may also call my office phone, but that is a less efficient means of reaching me. I always answer email within 48 hours, so if you do not receive a reply, that means I did not get your email and you should try to contact me again. When addressing me, please address me in person or in email as Janet or Professor Donavan.

**Course Etiquette:** Students are expected to come to class on time and stay the entire time. If it is necessary to come late or leave early, please let me know in advance. If your schedule does not permit you to be on time and in class on a regular basis, please take another course. Students are expected to be respectful of each other and of the instructor; lively debate is encouraged, but personal attacks are prohibited. These guidelines should be obvious, and they will help to make the course a more enjoyable experience for all. For more information on University requirements regarding classroom behavior please see <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code).

**Electronic Devices:** Electronic devices, including computers, tablets and mobile phones, are prohibited in class. The use of these devices causes serious disruption in class and affects the learning of other students. Computers, phones and other devices must be turned off and put away during class. Students may appeal this policy on an individual basis by coming to office hours and providing sufficient reason why an exception to the policy is necessary. Exceptions to this policy are at the instructor's discretion.

**Honor code:** All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. In this course, students will receive a 0 on any assignment in which the honor code is violated. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode>

**Students with disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be

addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>.

**Religious observances:** Students with religious observances that conflict with course requirements will be accommodated whenever possible. In order to ensure such accommodation, students must notify the instructor within the first 2 weeks of the course to allow time to make such arrangements. For more information on the University policy, please see [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html)

**Discrimination and harassment:** The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>

**Course schedule and readings available on D2L**