

**Media and Politics
PSCI 4341-001
2:00-3:15 HUMN 135
Fall 2021**

Instructor: Dr. Janet Donovan
Office hours: Thursdays 11-1
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This class will be remote, per campus policy, from January 10-21.

The class is scheduled to be in-person from January 24 through the end of the semester.

When campus returns to in-person mode there will be no remote or online options for this class. We will follow campus and public health guidance on the operating mode for the class throughout the semester.

This syllabus is subject to amendment. Students will be notified if amendments are made.

Course Description: This course examines the role of the news media in the U.S. political process from a behavioral and institutional perspective.

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 Canvas, to explore three perspectives. First, we will learn an overview of the research and theories in this area. Second, we will focus specifically on how technological developments in the 21st century have changed the media system and its political roles. Finally, we will examine how media can or should be used to foster political engagement in a democratic system, such as in the U.S.

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. We will also engage in a number of group activities, both in-person and online, and also have panel discussions of student research near the end of the semester. 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, group activities, and exams
- 2) Understand how legal and technological change relate to changes in political communication
- 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 writing, presenting and discussing papers
- 7) Improve media literacy by becoming more conscious of our media choices

| Grading: | | Scale: | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|--------|----|
| Midterm exam | 25 points | 93-100 | A |
| Final exam | 25 points | 90-92 | A- |
| Semester project | | 88-89 | B+ |
| Paper | 25 points | 83-87 | B |
| Digital presentation | 5 points | 80-82 | B- |
| Panel discussions | 5 points | 78-79 | C+ |
| <u>Activities & Participation</u> | <u>15 points</u> | 73-77 | C |
| Total | 100 points | 70-72 | C- |
| | | 60-69 | D |
| | | ≤ 59 | F |

Required texts:

- Graber, Doris & Johanna Dunaway. 2018. *Mass Media & American Politics*, 10th ed. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA. ISBN 9781506340234
- Epstein, Ben. 2018. *The Only Constant is Change: Technology, Political Communication, and Innovation over Time*. Oxford. ISBN 9780190698973
- Forgette, Richard. 2018. *News Grazers: Media, Politics, and Trust in an Information Age*. CQ Press. ISBN 9781933116884

Additional required readings provided on Canvas.

Course Requirements:

Activities & Participation: We will engage in group activities over the course of the semester, including both in-class and online activities. Some activities are included in the schedule, others may be added over the course of the semester. There are no make-ups for group activities and participatory discussions, but students will have multiple opportunities to earn the maximum of 15 points. You will note there is no formal attendance grade in this class. Many days will have graded activities and participation opportunities- some announced and some unannounced. This is a discussion and participation oriented class, so it will be very difficult to be successful without regular attendance.

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam is an essay exam. The essay questions will be distributed in class, and students will submit the exam online. We will not have class on the date the midterm exam is due in order to give students time to complete the exam. The exam is worth 25 points of the final grade and is required to receive a passing grade in the course. Students are expected to take the exam on time and turn it in on time. Extensions, makeups and penalties are at the instructor's discretion and make-up exams would be in a different format than the original.

Final Exam: The final exam is an essay exam, and will be in the same format as the midterm. The essay questions will be distributed in class, and students will submit the exam online by the end of our assigned final exam period. We will not have an in-person meeting during the final exam time period. The exam is worth 25 points of the final grade and is required to receive a passing grade in the course. Students are expected to take the exam on time and turn it in on time. Extensions, makeups and penalties are at the instructor's discretion and make-up exams would be in a different format than the original.

Semester Project: The semester project will consist of three components, all designed to help students gain an in-depth understanding of a topic in politics & media and share that understanding with the class. The semester project is aimed at improving critical thinking, research, writing, and presentation skills of students, as well as substantive knowledge about the research topic. Students will be given a list of potential research topics with starter reading lists early in the semester.

Paper: Each student will write a 7-8 page, double-spaced, literature review on one of the topics distributed in class. More information about the format and expectations will be distributed with the topic options. The paper is valued at 25-points or 25 percent of the final grade, and is required for a passing grade in the course. Late papers will be penalized at 1-point per day.

Digital Presentation: Each student will prepare a digital presentation and post it on Canvas by the assigned due date. More information on digital presentations will be provided later in the semester. The digital presentation is valued at 5 points. Students are required to submit a digital presentation, and to view the digital presentations of the rest of the class.

Panel Discussions: Each student will be assigned a panel on one of the panel discussion dates, based on the chosen paper topic. In the panel discussions, students who researched a topic will serve as experts on that topic and answer questions from the instructor and the class. Students must participate in panel discussions on the date assigned. The panel discussion is valued at 5 points, and includes participating in the assigned panel, as well as being present for, and asking questions, in other panels. There are no make-ups for the panel presentations.

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 Canvas site for the course regularly, and for completing any assignments on Canvas 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. 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, Dr. Donovan or Professor Donovan.

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.

Electronic Devices: Students are encouraged to take notes by hand in this class. Students may use a computer or tablet to take notes, and to participate in activities. Students are not permitted to use devices for internet searches, communication with others, or distracting activities during class. Students violating this policy will be warned once. After the first warning, students violating the policy will not be permitted to use devices during regular class days. Please keep your phone put away and turned off or in airplane mode during class. Unless you are experiencing a personal or family emergency anything on the phone can wait 75 minutes until class is over. We will learn a lot about the damaging effects of electronic devices on learning, attention and psychological well-being in this class.

UNIVERSITY SYLLABUS STATEMENTS

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution policies](#).

REQUIREMENTS FOR COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements and all public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#). For more information, see the policy on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please follow the steps in the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

As of Aug. 13, 2021, CU Boulder has returned to requiring masks in classrooms and laboratories regardless of vaccination status. This requirement is a temporary precaution during the delta surge to supplement CU Boulder’s COVID-19 vaccine requirement. Exemptions include individuals who cannot medically tolerate a face covering, as well as those who are hearing-impaired or otherwise disabled or who are communicating with someone who is hearing-impaired or otherwise disabled and where the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication. If you qualify for a mask-related accommodation, please follow the steps in the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus. In addition, vaccinated instructional faculty who are engaged in an indoor instructional activity and are separated by at least 6 feet from the nearest person are exempt from wearing masks if they so choose.

Students who have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home. In this class, if

you are sick or quarantined and are missing a graded assignment, please contact the instructor for information on how to complete the work. If you will be missing two or fewer days of class and no graded assignments, you do not need to contact the instructor. If you are missing more than three days of class, please inform the instructor that you are unable to attend class (details not required) and information on how to proceed will be provided.

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

PREFERRED STUDENT NAMES AND PRONOUNS

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

HONOR CODE

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code academic integrity policy. Violations of the Honor Code may include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu; 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found on the [Honor Code website](#).

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND/OR RELATED RETALIATION

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by or against members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or email

cureport@colorado.edu. Information about OIEC, university policies, [reporting options](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about their rights, support resources, and reporting options.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, please contact the instructor by the third week of class if you require accommodation for a scheduled, graded assignment such as an exam. For all other days, please inform the instructor at least a week in advance that you will be unable to attend that day.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Course schedule and readings:

Readings are to be completed BEFORE class on the assigned day. This reading schedule may be altered by adding or subtracting readings, and/or changing dates.

Part I: The mass media as a political institution in American politics

Week 1: January 11 & 13

Tues: Introduction to course, brainstorming about mass media and politics, review syllabus

Thurs: The roles of media in the American political system

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 1

Week 2: January 18 & 20

Tues: Roles of media in American political system & concept of a free press

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 2 & 3

Thurs: The changing media landscape

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 4

Week 3: January 25 & 27

Tues: News-making, news-reporting and policy

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 5 & 6

Thurs: Media coverage of the executive, legislative and judicial branches in the U.S.

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 7

Week 4: February 1 & 3

Tues: Media coverage of the executive, legislative and judicial branches in the U.S. and state, local and international politics

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 8 & 9

Thurs: **Media coverage of the executive, legislative and judicial branches in the U.S.- in class activity**

Week 5: February 8 & 10

Tues: Media coverage of state, local and international politics and effects on attitudes and behavior

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch.10 & 11

Thurs: Elections in the digital era- **midterm exam distributed**

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 12

Week 6: February 15 & 17

Tues: Incivility, negativity and media bias and future of mass media in politics

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 13 & 14

Thurs: **Midterm exam due on Canvas by 8pm, NO CLASS MEETING**

Part 2: Examining the relationship between media and politics over time and beginning semester projects

Week 7: February 22 & 24

Tues: Introducing the semester project

Thurs: Political communication change

Readings: Epstein, chapters 1-2

Week 8: March 1 & 3

Tues: **Group activity in class for the semester project**

Thurs: Technology and behavior in political communication change

Readings: Epstein, chapters 3-4

Week 9: March 8 & 10

Tues: Case studies in political communication change

Readings: Epstein, chapter 5-6

Thurs: Case studies in political communication change

Readings: Epstein, chapters 7

Week 10: March 15 & 17

Tues: **In-class activity for the semester project**

Thurs: Stabilization after political communication change & current and future political communication

Readings: Epstein, chapter 8-9

Spring Break, no classes held March 21-25

Part 3: News habits and their relationship to news content, and continuing semester projects

Week 11: March 29 & 31

Tues: News grazing

Readings: Forgette chapter 1-2

Thurs: News makers, news producers, rise of commentary as news and partisan and opinion news

Readings: Forgette chapter 3-4

Week 12: April 5 & 7

Tues: Breaking news, fake news and assessing grazing theory

Readings: Forgette chapters 5-7

Thurs: **NO IN-PERSON CLASS MEETING. Please watch the recorded lecture on completing the digital presentation and participating in the panel discussions. Semester paper due on Canvas by 8pm**

Week 13: April 12 & 14

Tues: What does campaign finance law have to do with media in politics? **Digital presentations due online by 11:59pm**

Readings: TBA on Canvas

Thurs: **NO IN-PERSON CLASS MEETING. Please watch all digital presentations by next Tuesday**

Readings: TBA on Canvas

Part 4: Learning from class research

Week 14: April 19 & 21

Tues: Panel discussions

Thurs: Panel discussions

Week 15: April 26 & 28

Tues: Remaining questions about mass media and politics in the United States

Readings: TBA online

Thurs: Drawing conclusions about mass media and politics in the U.S., **Final exam distributed in class**

**Final exam due on Canvas by Sunday, May 1 at 7:00pm
(this is the end of our scheduled final exam slot)**