

Media and Politics

PSCI 4341-001

Fall 2019

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The citizen “lives in a world in which he cannot see, does not understand and is unable to direct.”

Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*

“The essential need ... is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is *the* problem of the public.”

John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*

OVERVIEW

This course examines the role of news media in the US political process from behavioral and institutional perspectives. Media and Politics is an American Politics course and may be counted toward PSCI American Field credit. The course provides an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of political communication, a confluence of scholarship from political science, media studies, and other disciplines. Political communication is composed of three primary actors: political elites, media, and citizens. We will explore how they interact in both prescriptive and empirical terms as we apply theory to practice. We begin with the public sphere, deliberative democracy, the marketplace of ideas and other normative models for how political communication *ought* to contribute to democratic citizenship.

As compelling as these perspectives appear, they must answer to the limitations, distractions, and pathologies of politics, media, and the public. The tension between our democratic aspirations and the reality of political communication make this field fertile for debate, research, reform, and activism. Readings and class discussions range from macro perspectives on culture, ideology, and political economy; to organizational models of news production and deliberation; to micro approaches in the political psychology of media use and cognition.

Expect a small amount of lecture most meetings to set up theoretical frameworks, but most class time will be devoted to discussion. Please make sure that you carefully read material for the day; 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 will be worked through in discussions. We will also engage in a number of group activities, both in-person and online,

and each student will contribute to a group project that will culminate in a presentation toward the end of the semester. We will consider the dynamics of political communication in contexts such as:

- ⊕ conversation, discussion, and deliberation in civic engagement
- ⊕ power, propaganda, and persuasion in mass media
- ⊕ campaign strategy, advertisement, and elections
- ⊕ communication technology and new expressions of citizenship
- ⊕ families, schools, and media in political socialization
- ⊕ sociology of news construction
- ⊕ media effects on public opinion
- ⊕ social movements empowered through digital media
- ⊕ personalization of politics
- ⊕ equality, voice, and digital divides
- ⊕ populism and undercurrents of anti-intellectualism
- ⊕ dissent, marginalized voices, and alternative platforms



COURSE OBJECTIVES

Learn about key ideas and concepts in political communication scholarship through reading the textbooks, participating in class lectures and discussions, group activities, and exams.

Understand how legal and technological change relate to changes in political communication.

Understand the many ways the media participate in the US political system.

Build understanding of academic research and scholarship in political communication.

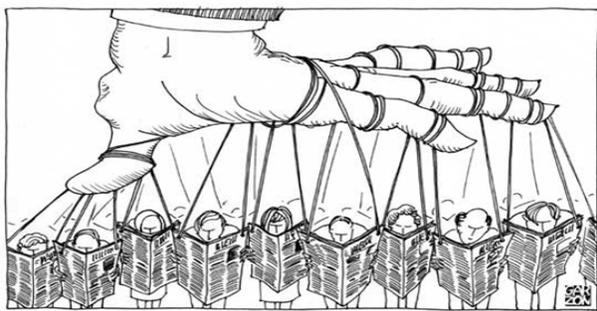
Improve critical thinking skills in applying ideas from academic research to everyday media use and political understanding.

Enhance writing and research skills through writing, presenting and discussing papers.

Improve media literacy by becoming more conscious of our media choices.

ASSIGNMENTS

Research Paper. Each student will write a literature review in one of the areas covered by the course. This represents your biggest challenge for the course and I have weighted the assignment appropriately in terms of overall grade. You can contemplate research ideas by considering the range of issues, problems, and controversies covered by the assigned readings and specified in the course schedule below. I will provide guidelines for a paper's content and organization.



The assignment includes:

- ⊕ 400-600 word proposal.
- ⊕ Final paper: 7-8 pages (including references section), 12-point type, double-spaced.

Reform Project (Team). I will assign students to small groups based on interest in specific areas of political communication. Students will meet in groups several times, in and out of class, to refine a specific research question. Your motivation for examining media in a political context should be derived from application of theory to practice. In other words, theory will provide you with a guide or framework for evaluating a problem that lends itself to reform. I will distribute guidelines. Here are the graded components:

- ⊕ 400-600 word proposal (team effort)
- ⊕ Presentation (team effort)
- ⊕ Working individually, each team member will write a summary of the project goals, results from analyses, and implications for reform (600-800 words).

EXAMS

Three exams will test your overall knowledge of material presented in required readings, lecture presentations, and class discussions. I will provide practice questions so that you can get a feel for what the exams will look like.

GRADING

Learning in this class is a collaborative endeavor and thus attendance and *active* participation are mandatory. If you must miss a class, provide documentation to explain the absence.

⊕ Attendance and active participation	20%
⊕ Research paper	
Proposal	5%
Final paper	25%
⊕ Team reform project	
Group proposal	5%
Group presentation	10%
Individual summary	5%
⊕ Three exams (10% each)	30%



READINGS

Due dates for assigned readings are incorporated in the schedule below. Our primary text are:

Iyengar, S. (2019). *Media politics: A citizen's guide* (4th edition). New York: Norton.

Forgette, R. (2019). *News grazers: Media, politics, and trust in an information age*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Additional readings are available from Canvas. Please expect changes to the reading list depending on students' interests and developments such as news coverage of the 2020 presidential campaign.

Bennett, W. L., & Pfetsch, B. (2018). Rethinking political communication in a time of disrupted public spheres. *Journal of Communication*, 68, 243-253.

Bimber, B. (2003, 2011). How information shapes political institutions. In D. A. Graber (ed.), *Media power in politics* (pp. 7-17). Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Blumler, J. G., & Kavanagh, D. (1999). The third age of political communication: Influences and features. *Political Communication*, 16, 209-230.

Claussen, D. S. (2011). A brief history of anti-intellectualism in American media. *Academe*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Professors.

Fraser, N. (2010). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy (1992). In J. Gripsrud, H. Moe, A. Molander, & G. Murdock (eds.), *The idea of the public sphere: A Reader* (pp. 127-149). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Galvan, Jose L. (2004). Guidelines for developing a coherent essay, pp. 73-79 in *Writing literature reviews*. Glendale, CA: Pyrczak.

Gripsrud, J., Moe, H., Molander, A., & Murdock, G. (2010). Editors' introduction. In *The idea of the public sphere: A reader* (pp. xiii-xxviii). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Habermas, J. (2010). The public sphere: An encyclopedia article (1964). In J. Gripsrud, H. Moe, A. Molander, & G. Murdock (eds.), *The idea of the public sphere: A reader* (pp. 114-120). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Hall, K., Goldstein, D. M., & Ingram, M. B. (2016). The hands of Donald Trump: Entertainment, gesture, spectacle. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 6(2): 71-100.

Lippmann, W. (1922, 2007). Newspapers. *Public opinion*. Reprinted in D. A. Graber (ed.), *Media power in politics*, 5th edition (pp. 48-55). Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

McDevitt, M., & Ferrucci, P. (2018). Populism, journalism, and the limits of reflexivity: The case of Donald J. Trump. *Journalism Studies*, 19(4), 512-526.

McDevitt, M., & Kiouisis, S. (2015). Active political parenting: Youth contributions during election campaigns. *Social Science Quarterly*, 96(1), 19-33.

Mouffe, C. (2010). Deliberative democracy or agonistic liberalism? (1999) In J. Gripsrud, H. Moe, A. Molander, & G. Murdock (eds.), *The idea of the public sphere: A reader* (pp. 270-278). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Perloff, R. M. (2014). *The dynamics of political communication*. New York: Routledge. Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 5.

Schudson, M. (2008). *Why democracies need an unlovable press* (pp. 50-62). Cambridge: Polity.

OFFICE HOURS

Please take advantage of our office hours. Some of the best learning takes place in one-to-one discussions. If you find yourself struggling with the readings or any other aspect of the course, ask for help early in the semester.

CU POLICIES

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 or injury, see Temporary Medical Conditions under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

Classroom Behavior. Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. 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. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender

pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester. For more information, see the policies on classroom behavior and the Student Code of Conduct.

Honor Code. All students enrolled in CU Boulder courses are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: 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 who are 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. See the Honor Code Office website for more information.

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation. CU Boulder is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. The university will not tolerate sexual misconduct intimate partner abuse (including dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination or harassment by 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 at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, anonymous reporting, and the campus resources can be found on the OIEC website. Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Observances. 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. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html. For this class, inform me as soon as possible about any anticipated conflicts with exams, assignments, or attendance.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

My research interests fall under political communication, youth political socialization, and journalism studies. I joined the CU faculty in 2001 after teaching at the University of New Mexico. Go Lobos! Prior to my teaching career, I worked as a reporter and editorial writer for newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area. I graduated with a BA in political science from the University of California, Berkeley and a PhD in communication from Stanford. The earthquake election of 2016 confirmed for me the importance of confronting a problem that journalists prefer to ignore—their complicity in democratic decline. My forthcoming book— *Where Ideas Go to Die: Anti-intellectualism in Journalism and the Decline of American Democracy* (Oxford)—explores the role of news media in social control of intellect. Speaking of intelligence, an Australian shepherd keeps my wife Angela and I in line at home, herding us when necessary along with three cats. Angela dances flamenco; I run trails with Sierra the sheep dog.

SCHEDULE

Week	Topics , Readings & Assignments
Week 1 Aug. 26, 28, 30	Overview of course Mon: Introductions, syllabus, assignments Media, politics & democratic theory I Wed: Perloff chapter 1, The panoply of political communication [^] Fri: Gripsrud et al., Editors' introduction [^] ; Habermas, The public sphere [^]
Week 2 Sept. 4, 6	Media, politics & democratic theory II Wed: Fraser, Rethinking the public sphere [^] Fri: Mouffe, Deliberative democracy or agonistic liberalism? [^]
Week 3 Sept. 9, 11, 13	Realist perspectives on news media and public opinion Mon: Lippmann, Newspapers [^] Wed: Schudson, Why democracies need an unlovable [^] Fri: No class—option for students to meet with me about research paper
Week 4 Sept. 16, 18, 20	Political communication as a field of study Mon: Perloff chapter 2, What is political communication? [^] Wed: Perloff chapter 3, The study of political communication [^] Fri: First exam
Week 5 Sept. 23, 25, 27	Ages of political communication: history and technology Mon: Bimber, How information shapes political institutions [^] Wed: Blumler, The third age of political communication [^] Fri: Bennett, Rethinking political communication Fri: Proposal for research paper due
Week 6 Sept. 30, Oct. 2, 4	Writing research papers Mon: Galvan, Guidelines for developing a coherent essay [^] Political socialization Wed: Perloff chapter 5, Contemporary political socialization [^] Fri: McDevitt & Kiouisis, Active political parenting [^]
Week 7 Oct. 7, 9, 11	Media-based politics Mon: Iyengar chapter 1, Image is everything Wed: Iyengar chapter 2, The press and the democratic process Fri: Meet in teams to discuss reform projects

Week 8 Oct. 14, 16, 18	Market pressures on news production Mon: Iyengar chapter 3, The media marketplace Wed: Iyengar chapter 4, Reporters, official sources Governing through the media Fri: Iyengar chapter 9, Going public
Week 9 Oct. 21, 23, 25	Media-based campaigns Mon: Iyengar chapter 5, New media, new forms of campaigning Wed: Iyengar chapter 6, Campaigning through the media Fri: Second exam
Week 10 Oct. 28, 30, Nov. 1	The making of a news grazer Mon: Forgette chapter 1, Why don't we trust Congress and the media? Wed: Forgette chapter 2, The news grazer Fri: Forgette chapter 3, News makers and producers
Week 11 Nov. 4, 6, 8	The effects of news grazing Mon: Forgette chapter 4, Partisan news Wed: Forgette chapter 5, Breaking news Fri: Forgette chapter 6, Fake news
Week 12 Nov. 11, 13, 15	Summary of news grazing theory Mon: Forgette chapter 7, Overexposed The rise of populism I Wed: Claussen, A brief history of anti-intellectualism in American media [^] Fri: McDevitt & Ferrucci, Populism, journalism, and the limits of reflexivity [^]
Week 13 Nov. 18, 20, 22	The rise of populism II Mon: Hall et al., The hands of Trump [^] Wed: no class, reading day Fri: Third exam
Fall break	See you in Cabo!
Week 14 Dec. 2, 4, 6	Mon, Wed, Fri: Group project presentations Mon: Individual summaries of group projects due
Week 15 Dec. 9, 11, 13	Mon, Wed: Group project presentations Fri: Final paper due by 11:59 pm

[^] Canvas