

Media and Politics
PSCI 4341-001
12:30-1:45 Tuesday & Thursday CLUB 10
Spring 2020
Instructor: Dr. Janet Donovan
Office hours: Monday 1-2 & Tuesday 11-12
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This syllabus may be amended- 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 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 news media have changed over time in the United States. Finally, we will examine the effects of current news content on peoples' understanding and perceptions of the American political system.

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	20 points	83-87	B
Digital presentation	5 points	80-82	B-
Panel discussions	5 points	78-79	C+
Activities	12 points	73-77	C
<u>Attendance & participation</u>	<u>8 points</u>	70-72	C-
Total	100 points	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 online.**Course Requirements:**

Group Activities: 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- students who miss group activities will have their grades calculated by removing the activity from the denominator of their final grade.

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. 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.

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 8 points.

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. 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.

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 20-points or 20 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. An alternative assignment will be provided only in documented cases of medical or family emergency, and are at the instructor's discretion. 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.

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.

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. There may be days where students are asked to bring electronic devices as part of a topic or group activity.

University 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 so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

HONOR CODE

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course 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. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND/OR RELATED RETALIATION

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and 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 (OIEC) 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 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, students should contact the instructor within two weeks of any necessary accommodation. I am happy to make religious accommodations.

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

Course schedule and readings:

Reading Schedule:

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 1: The mass media as a political institution in American politics

Week 1: January 14 & 16

Tuesday: Introduction to course, brainstorming about mass media and politics, pass out syllabus

Thursday: The roles of media in the American political system

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 1

Week 2: January 21 & 23

Tuesday: Media ownership & the concept of a free press

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 2 & 3

Thursday: The changing media landscape

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 4

Week 3: January 28 & 30

Tuesday: News-making, news-reporting and policy

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 5 & 6

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

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 7

Week 4: February 4 & 6

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

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 8

Thursday: Media coverage of state, local and international politics

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch.9

Week 5: February 11 & 13

Tuesday: Media coverage of state, local and international politics

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch.10

Thursday: Mon: Media effects on attitudes and behavior

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 11

Week 6: February 18 & 20

Tuesday: Elections in the digital era

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 12

Thursday: Incivility, negativity and media bias

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 13

News habits & news content in-class activity, **Midterm exam distributed in class**

Week 7: February 25 & 27

Tuesday: The future of mass media in politics,

Readings: Graber & Dunaway, ch. 14

Thursday: **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 8: March 3 & 5

Tuesday: Introducing the semester project, group activity in class

Thursday: Political communication change

Readings: Epstein, chapters 1-2

Week 9: March 10 & 12

Tuesday: Technology and behavior in political communication change

Readings: Epstein, chapters 3-4

Thursday: Case studies in political communication change

Readings: Epstein, chapter 5-6

Week 10: March 17 & 19

Tuesday: Case studies in political communication change & stabilization after change

Readings: Epstein, chapters 7-8

Thursday: Current and future status of political communication change

Readings: Epstein, chapter 9

Spring Break March 23-27, no class meetings or responsibilities this week

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

Week 11: March 31 & April 2

Tuesday: Group meetings on paper topics- more information TBA

Thursday: News habits & news content in-class activity

Week 12: April 7 & 9

Tuesday: News habits & news content in-class activity

Thursday: News grazing and perception of Congress

Readings: Forgette chapter 1-2

Week 13: April 14 & 16

Tuesday: News makers, news producers, and the rise of commentary as news and partisan news

Readings: Forgette chapter 3-4

Thursday: **Papers and digital presentations due on Canvas by 8pm, NO CLASS MEETING**

Week 14: April 21 & 23

Tuesday: Breaking news and faking news

Readings: Forgette chapter 5-6

Thursday: Assessing news grazing theory

Readings: Forgette chapter 7

News habits & news content in-class activity

Part 4: Learning from class research & drawing conclusions about media & politics in the U.S.

Week 15: April 28 & 30

Tuesday: Panel presentations and questions

Weds: Drawing conclusions about mass media and politics in the United States, **Final exam distributed in class**

Final exam due on Canvas by Monday, May 2 at 4pm