**PSC 300.102 MEDIA & POLITICS**

Fall 2011 – T/Th 11-12:20

Eggers 032

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**COURSE OVERVIEW AND GOALS**

This course provides an overview of the media’s role in American political life. In doing so, we will focus on several broad themes: the relationship between the media and government; the process of newsmaking and how it shapes the content of political news; the effects of the media on public opinion and voting behavior; and the critical changes to the media (new and old) taking place today. We will devote many of our class discussions and readings to scholarship in political science and communications. But we will also pay special attention to the content of the news we encounter every day—be it about the historic presidential contest between Barack Obama and John McCain, the high-decibel, raucous debate over health care reform, the war in Iraq, Iranian election protests and the rise of Twitter, or the revealing of secret anti-terrorism programs.

In the end, the course has four goals:

* To help you understand the development of the mass media and its role in American politics
* To help you understand how the interaction among journalists, politicians, and citizens shapes

contemporary American politics

* To help you learn how social scientists ask and answer interesting questions about politics
* To help you become a savvy consumer of political news, in this class and beyond

**READINGS**

There is no textbook for this course. Most of the readings—mostly journal articles and book chapters—will available for download through our course’s Blackboard page (http://blackboard.syr.edu). The rest are available online. You are also expected to keep up with current events by regularly reading a newspaper.

On the Blackboard page for this class, click the “Tools” button on the left-hand menu, and then click the “Course Reserves” folder. Here, you’ll find PDF versions of each week’s readings. Even factoring in the cost of printing, my hope is that this will be less expensive than purchasing a course packet of photocopied readings. The flip side, of course, is that it will be your responsibility to download the items as they are assigned. It might be worthwhile to print the readings early in the semester, which will keep you from having to do this every week.

**Articles and Chapters**

There are several assigned articles or book chapters for most weeks. Some are freely available on the Internet, with the URLs listed in the course schedule below. The rest are posted on Blackboard. On the Blackboard page for this class, click the “Documents” button on the left-hand menu, and then click the “Course Readings” folder. Here, you’ll find PDF versions of each week’s readings. Even factoring in the cost of printing (and those outrageously priced printer cartridges!), my hope is that this will be less expensive than purchasing a course packet of photocopied readings. The flip side, of course, is that it will be your responsibility to download the items as they are assigned. It might be worthwhile to print the readings early in the semester, which will keep you from having to do this every week.

**The Newspaper**

It should come as no surprise that in a class called Media and Politics, you are expected to keep up with political news. Reading a newspaper is the best way to do this. Our discussions in class will frequently touch on current events, often as a way to illustrate a concept from lecture or a reading. Not only will regularly consuming the news bring course material to life, it will undoubtedly make the class more interesting. (And as a non-trivial side benefit, being a news junkie invariably gives you interesting things to talk about at parties when you find yourself in a conversation that has lapsed into awkward silence.)

You are free to read (in print or online) any paper(s) of your choosing, with the following limitation. You need to choose a news source that includes frequent coverage of national politics. For that reason, The Daily Orange, fine publication that it is, does not count. The following are a few suggestions, any of which are excellent sources of political news: The New York Times: www.nyt.com (requires free online registration) The Wall Street Journal: www.wsj.com (requires paid online subscription) The Los Angeles Times: www.latimes.com The Washington Post: www.washingtonpost.com (requires free online registration)

**EVALUATION**

Your grade in this class will be based on class attendance, an in-class midterm exam, two short writing assignments, a research paper, and a take-home final exam. The breakdown is as follows

* Participation: 10%
* Midterm exam: 20%
* Two short assignments: 20% total (10% each)
* Research paper: 30%
* Take-home final exam: 20%

At the end of the semester, your grade will be assigned based on the following scale:

A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D (60­69), and F (0-59). (Note that there are no +/- grades in the D or F range.)

**Exam Format**

Both the midterm and final will consist of essay questions and short-answer identifications. The midterm will be taken in class on **October 13,** but we will hand out a list of possible essay questions one week earlier. One of the questions will appear on the exam. The short answers will relate to the essay questions that are not chosen. The final exam will be a take-home. We will distribute it on **December 8**, and it will be due **December 13.** It will not be cumulative.

**Makeup exams will be given only in extreme circumstances**, such as the death of an immediate family member. We will be the final arbiters of what “extreme” means. If you miss an exam or assignment, it is your responsibility to notify us immediately.

**Short Assignments**

Twice during the semester, we will hand out a short assignment that will be due several classes later. The first assignments will ask you to write a short paper (2-4 pages typed, double-spaced) engaging a question raised by a reading or class discussion. The first assignment will be due **September 27.**  In the second assignment, you will spell out your data sources and hypotheses for the research paper assignment. The second assignment will be due **October 25.** Missing the due date will cost you one-third of a letter grade for each day the assignment is late. For example, if your paper is three days late, you can score no higher than a B+. These deductions are not negotiable.

**Participation**

Your participation is necessary and vital to the class. To encourage you to participate as well as to pay attention to the news, your participation grade will be determined by two factors. Each class period, one or two students will find a newspaper or magazine article that relates to the theoretical readings. The student will summarize the story orally during class and explain how it relates to the class readings. I will assign the dates for the newspaper assignment.

The second part of your participation grade is formulating and sending 3 discussion questions for the next class by **1 pm** the night before class each week. You will be assigned to send questions either for Tuesday or Thursday and will send questions each week for the course of the semester. Please submit your questions in Blackboard under “Discussions”

To receive full credit, these questions must go beyond questions of fact or clarification to more theoretical inquiries about our readings. Your questions should grapple with the readings more deeply, considering topics like:

* What are the implications/consequences of these findings?
* Do these findings help to explain or shed light on some recent political event or news story?
* Are the authors’ conclusions convincing to you? What might make them more convincing?
* What is missing or flawed in these studies?
* How do these readings relate to other course materials and class discussions?

In addition to your three discussion questions, I encourage you to also use this forum to clear up any clarification questions you might have from the readings. Please feel free to mention any terms or methodology questions or other topics you are confused or curious about that you would like me to address during our class time. (Note that these clarification questions do not count toward your 3 question assignment).

Discussion questions will be docked 20% for each hour they are late. (Thus, questions received between 1pm and 2pm can score at best 80/100, while questions received after 5pm will receive a 0.)

**Research Paper**

On **November 17**, you will turn in a 9-12-page research paper.Your paper will involve an original “content analysis” of media coverage of a current policy debate in the United States—health care, the war in Afghanistan or Iraq, the BP oil spill, the debt ceiling, etc. The specific topic will be of your choosing, but I will provide some guidelines for the paper within the first few weeks of the semester. We will talk more about content analysis, which involves quantitative analysis of mass media content, as the semester proceeds.

**SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

There are many ways to succeed in this class. Cheating and plagiarism are not among them and will not be tolerated. The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu. Please see me if you have any questions about what constitutes original work.

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

I encourage and value student participation. Keep in mind that since this is a class on politics and media, you will no doubt encounter point of views that differ from your own. Students in this class come from a variety of personal and academic backgrounds and these backgrounds may lead to a variety of perspectives on the political world. I believe that having a variety of viewpoints will make our discussions more interesting and will allow us to learn from each other. We will maintain a respectful dialogue even when we disagree and no student’s grade will be affected by his or her personal views.

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs, although I cannot arrange for disability-related accommodations.

**RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES**

It is the policy of Syracuse University that no student should be refused admission or be expelled because he or she is unable to participate in any examination, study, or work requirement because of his or her religious holy day requirements. An opportunity will be provided to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may have been missed because of an absence due to a religious observance providing that I have been notified in writing before the end of the second week of classes. No fees will be charged to the student for the costs incurred by the University for such makeup work. In effecting this policy, the University agrees that no adverse or prejudicial effect should result to any student who avails herself or himself of its provisions. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

**THOSE INDISPENSABLE CELL PHONES**

I love cell phones and the Internet. And while I’m as big a fan as anyone of hearing Bruno Mars’s “Grenade” as a ringtone, the fact is that cell phones are a distraction. As a courtesy to me and your classmates, please turn off yours before entering class. If you don’t, the rule is this: If your phone rings in class, I get to answer it and talk to whomever is on the line—whether it’s your mother, brother, or that person you met at Chuck’s night. So leave it on at your own peril. I hope it also goes without saying that texting during class is prohibited. It’s distracting to me and to your fellow classmates. If I see you texting, I will, in the middle of lecture, summon my most parental, nagging, irritating voice to call you out and ask you to leave the class for the day. Sounds like a bad scene. Let’s avoid it.

The Internet and laptops have fundamentally changed the classroom experience. Back in my day, all we had were chisels and stone tablets. My, how lucky you are. While laptops afford you the opportunity to take notes with lightening speed, they also afford you the opportunity to surf Facebook, check scores on ESPN, and make dinner reservations while you’re in class. While it may be good for efficiency, it is bad for learning and undermines the experience that you can gain in college. I will, on a TRIAL basis, allow laptops. However, I will be monitoring your attention and will decide whether I will continue allowing laptops through the semester. It should go without saying, though, that even through the trial period, I expect that your attention and energy is on class business and that you are NOT surfing the Internet, no matter how appealing.

**COURSE SCHEDULE** (Note: This is subject to change as we proceed through the semester.)

August 30: Course Introduction

**Part I: The Media’s Place in American Politics**

(September 4-13)

September 1 : The Role of the Media in a Democracy

* Graber, Doris A. 2008. Mass Media and American Politics, 8th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Chapter 1 (“Media Power and Government Control”), pp. 1-30.
* Schudson, Michael. 1996. The Power of News. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Introduction (“News as Public Knowledge”), pp. 1-37.
* “Key News Audiences Now Blend Online and Traditional Sources: Audience Segments in a Changing News Environment.” 2008. Report of Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Online at: http://people-press.org/report/444/news-media.

September 6, 8: The American Media: A Comparative and Historical Perspective

* Hallin, Daniel C. and Robert Giles. 2005. “Presses and Democracies.” In Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (eds.), The Press. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 4-16.
* Schudson, Michael. 2003. The Sociology of News. New York: W.W. Norton. Chapter 4 (“Where News Came From: The History of Journalism”), pp. 64-89.

September 13: Interlude—A Content Analysis Workshop

* Neuendorf, Kimberly A. 2002. The Content Analysis Guidebook. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications. Chapter 1 (“Defining Content Analysis”), pp. 1-25.

**Part II: Freedom of the Press and Current Controversies**

(September15-20)

September 15, 20: Freedom of the Press

* Sanford, Bruce W. and Jane E. Kirtley. 2005. “The First Amendment Tradition and Its Critics.” In Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (eds.), The Press. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 263-276.
* Jost, Kenneth and Alan Greenblatt. 2009. “Free-Press Disputes.” In Issues in Media: Selections from CQ Researcher. Washington, DC: CQ Press. pp. 71-92.
* Toobin, Jeffrey. 2006. “Name That Source: Why Are the Courts Leaning on Journalists?” The New Yorker, Jan. 16, pp. 30-36. Online at: <http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/01/16/060116fa_fact>
* Baquet, Dean and Bill Keller. 2006. “When Do We Publish a Secret?” *New York Times*. July

Online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/01/opinion/01keller.html?pagewanted=all.

ASSIGNMENT 1 HANDED OUT – Tuesday, September 20

**Part III: The Newsmaking Process**

(September 27-October 6)

September 22, 27: Norms, Values, Economics, and Other Factors that Shape the News

* Gans, Herbert J. 1979. Deciding What’s News. New York: Pantheon. Chapter 2 (“Values in the News”), pp. 39-55.
* Bennett, W. Lance. 2007. News: The Politics of Illusion, 7th ed. New York: Pearson Longman. Chapter 2 (“News Content: Four Information Biases that Matter”), pp. 36-73.
* Auletta, Ken. 2005. “Fault Line.” The New Yorker. October 10. Online at: http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/051010fa\_fact1
* Iyengar, Shanto and Jennifer A. McGrady. 2007. Media Politics: A Citizen’s Guide. New York:

W.W. Norton. Chapter 7 (“Going Public: Governing through the Media”), pp. 167-196.

ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE IN CLASS – Tuesday, September 27

September 29: NO CLASS, ROSH HASHANAH

October 4, 6: Media Bias: Reality, Myth, Evidence, and Perception

* Niven, David. 2002. Tilt? The Search for Media Bias. Westport, Conn.: Praeger. Chapter 3 (“The Jury is Still Out: Academic Evidence on Media Bias”), pp. 51-71.
* Vallone, Robert P., Lee Ross, and Mark R. Lepper. 1985. “The Hostile Media Phenomenon: Biased Perception and Perceptions of Media Bias in Coverage of the Beruit Massacre.” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 49(3): 577-585.

October 11: Who gets covered – How presidents get covered

* Samuel Kernell, Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership, pp.78-115, 121-147

MIDTERM ESSAY QUESTIONS HANDED OUT – Thursday, October 6

October 13: \*\*Midterm Exam\*\*

**Part IV: Policy Debates and Election Campaigns**

(October 18 – November 3)

October 18, 20: Coverage of Policy Debates

* Bosso, Christopher. 1989. “Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and the Discovery of Famine in Ethiopia.” In Michael Margolis and Gary A. Mauser (eds.), Manipulating Public Opinion: Essays on Public Opinion as a Dependent Variable. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing. pp. 153-¬174.
* Iyengar, Shanto. 1996. “Framing Responsibiilty for Political Issues.” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 546, The Media and Politics , pp. 59-70.
* Lawrence, Regina G. 2000. The Politics of Force: Media and the Construction of Police Brutality. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press. Chapter 5 (“Making Big News: Story Cues and Critical Coverage of Policing”), pp. 86-111
* Jamieson, Kathleen Hall and Joseph N. Capella. 1998. “The Role of the Press in the Health Care Reform Debate of 1993-1994.” In Doris A. Graber, Denis McQuail, and Pippa Norris (eds.),The Politics of the News. Washington, DC: CQ Press. pp. 110- 131

ASSIGNMENT 2 HANDED OUT – Tuesday, October 18

October 25, 27: Coverage of Foreign Policy and War

* Bennett, W. Lance. 1994. “The News about Foreign Policy.” In W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz (eds.) Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 12-40.
* Entman, Robert. 2003. “Cascading activation: Contesting the White House’s frame after 9/11.” Political Communication. 20, pp. 415-432.
* Barstow, David. 2008. “Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon’s Hidden Hand.” New York Times, April 20. Page A1. Online at: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/us/20generals.html?pagewanted=all.
* Gadarian, Shana Kushner. 2010. The Politics of Threat: How Terrorism News Shapes Foreign Policy Attitudes. Journal of Politics. 72(2): pp. 1-15.

ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE – Tuesday, Tuesday October 25

November 1, 3: News Coverage of Election Campaigns

* Patterson, Thomas E. 1994. Out of Order. New York: Vintage. Prologue and Chapter 1 (“Truth and

Falsehood on the Campaign Trail,” “The Miscast Institution”), pp. 3-52

* Iyengar, Shanto, Helmut Norpoth, and Kyu S. Hahn. 2004. “Consumer Demand for Election News:

The Horse Race Sells.” Journal of Politics 66(1): 157-175.

* “Winning the Media Campaign: How the Press Reported the 2008 General Election.” 2008. Report of the Project for Excellence in Journalism. Online at: http://www.journalism.org/node/13307. (Read just the overview on the main page.)

**Part V: The Media and Public Opinion**

(November 8-17)

November 8, 10, 15, 17: Media Effects on Public Attitudes

* Zaller, John. 1992. The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 6-28.
* Page, Benjamin I., Robert Y. Shapiro, and Glenn R. Dempsey. 1987. “What Moves Public Opinion?” American Political Science Review 81(1): 23-44.
* Iyengar, Shanto, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. 1982. “Experimental Demonstrations of the ‘Not-So-Minimal’ Consequences of Television News Programs.” American Political Science Review 76(4): 848-858.
* Druckman, James N. 2004. “Priming the Vote: Campaign Effects in a U.S. Senate Election.” Political Psychology 25(4): 577-594.
* Bai, Matt. 2005. “The Framing Wars.” New York Times, July 17. Online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/17/magazine/17DEMOCRATS.html>.
* Gilens, Martin 1996. “Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the American News Media.” The Public Opinion Quarterly 60 (4): 515-541.
* Hetherington, Marc J. 1996. “The Media's Role in Forming Voters' National Economic Evaluations in 1992.” American Journal of Political Science 40 (2): 372-395.

RESEARCH PAPER DUE – Thursday, November 17

November 22, 24: NO CLASS —Fall break and Thanksgiving (Eat some turkey!)

**Part VI: The Changing Media Environment: Content and Consequence**

(November 29 – December 8)

November 29, December 1: Has Television Ruined Democracy?

* Putnam, Robert D. 2000. Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. New York: Simon & Schuster. Chapter 13 (“Technology and Mass Media”), pp. 216-246.
* Mutz, Diana C. and Byron Reeves. 2005. “The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust.” American Political Science Review 99(1): 1-15.
* Arceneaux, Kevin and Martin Johnson. Does Media Choice Minimize Videomalaise? Selective Exposure and the Effect of Talk Shows on Political Trust <http://astro.temple.edu/~arceneau/videomalaise.pdf>
* Patterson, Thomas. 1996. “Bad News, Bad Governance” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 546, The Media and Politics, pp. 97-108.

December 6, 8: The Newest Media Era: Softer News, More Choice, a Revolution in Tweets?

* Baum, Matthew A. 2002. “Sex, Lies, and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public” American Political Science Review 96(1): 91-109
* Prior, Markus. 2005. “News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout.” American Journal of Political Science 49(3): 577-592.
* Lawrence, Eric, John Sides, and Henry Farrell. 2010. “Self-Segregation or Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics.” Perspectives on Politics. 8(1): 141-157.
* Read also a *Los Angeles Times* editorial by Sides and Lawrence that summarizes the main findings of the paper. Online at http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-op-sides13-2008jul13,0,1656945.story
* Grossman, Lev. 2009. “Iran Protests: Twitter, the Medium of the Movement.” Time, June 17. Online at: http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1905125,00.html.

TAKE-HOME FINAL HANDED OUT DECEMBER 8, DUE DECEMBER 13