
MFJS 2280: POLITICS AND MEDIA

Sturm Hall 253, 12:00 – 1:50 p.m., M & W

Autumn Quarter 2013

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

What are the “media?” How do they influence politics in the United States? How do politicians influence what we see in the media? What kind of media do citizens need to properly govern themselves in a democracy? How are new media technologies like Twitter and Facebook changing the democratic process in America?

In *Politics and Media* we will examine the nature of the media and how media institutions shape the way citizens understand politics. Because this is an election year in the United States, we will spend most of time discussing U.S. institutions, however, we will also spend time discussing global media institutions and the role media play in various societies. We will explore the role of media in providing information for citizens in a democracy, examine how the media influence the political process, and investigate how the goals of and changes within the media industry influence the effect media coverage has on the political process. Through our study we will explore how the media either enhance or limit the potential for citizens to contribute to democracy.

The course will begin by exploring the history of the media, as well as the routines and procedures media institutions follow. We will examine how media decide what to cover and how they cover it. Next, we will consider the interaction of politicians, political institutions and the media, covering political advertising and candidate media strategies during campaigns. In addition we will study how politicians use media to achieve their policy goals once they are in office. Along the way, we will discuss whether traditional theories about the media and politics hold up given new media technologies.

OBJECTIVES

In this course students will:

- **Learn the history and current structure of the media.**
- **Recognize current issues influencing the rapidly changing media environment.**
- **Describe and articulate basic principles relating to media and politics.**

- **Learn to articulate concepts and principles specific to the study of media and politics.**
- **Describe and explain how social scientific methods are used to understand media and politics.**

REQUIRED TEXTS

Graber, Doris A. (2010). *Mass Media and American Politics*, 8th edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Bennett, W. Lance (2012). *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 9th Edition. Glenview, IL: Pearson

A variety of other readings including selected articles and other material will be accessible on the Internet.

BLACKBOARD WEBSITE

This course uses the Blackboard Website that the University provides. The Blackboard site is a crucial resource for this course, and you will need to access it frequently. To do so, go to <http://blackboard.du.edu/>. From this page, click the login button, and then enter your username and password. You will then enter the Blackboard site, where any course you are taking that uses the Blackboard system will be listed.

You will find important course materials posted on the BB site: the syllabus; links to Web-based readings; materials to help you; PowerPoint slides from class lectures; and other important materials. Be sure you know how to access your account.

READINGS & ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Learning is not a spectator sport. Class attendance is essential. This is not a course for students who do not want to attend or contribute to class.

Attendance will be taken at the start of every class. During the course each student will be permitted three (3) absences for whatever reason (job interview, sickness, family commitments, ski days, etc.). I do not require any advanced notice of your absence nor explanation when you return. There will be no additional “excused absences” beyond these three. For each absence in excess of three, regardless of the reason, your final score in the class will be reduced by one point. A tardy will count as ½ of an absence as will leaving class early.

View your three free absences as the sick leave and personal days generally allowed employees in a work environment. In the workforce, employees who use up all their sick leave and personal days and then find themselves obliged to take off additional time do so without pay. Having your grade reduced is the equivalent to “unpaid leave.”

In addition, all reading assignments should be completed *before* the class period during which we will discuss a particular topic. *You may be called on in class to answer questions related to the day's readings. This is true even if you do not volunteer to answer the question.* In sum, it will be extremely difficult for you to follow the lectures, participate in the discussion, respond to my questions, and ask intelligent questions of your own if you come to class inadequately prepared. Attendance at lectures and *informed* participation in discussion are essential to doing well in this class.

GRADING

Your final grade will be composed of the following elements:

Exam One	20%
Exam Two	20%
Exam Three	30%
Journal	20%
Participation	10%

The alpha/numeric conversion for course grades is as follows:

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+ = 67-69	D = 60-66	F = below 60	

EXAMS

You will demonstrate what you have learned by taking three (3) exams during the course. The exams will be composed primarily of true/false and multiple choice questions, with some identification, short answer and essay questions. The exams will cover material from lectures, discussions, assigned readings, handouts, guest speakers and any movies we may watch during the semester. The questions will require you to define, apply and synthesize course concepts and readings.

JOURNAL

You'll be responsible for keeping a "Politics and Media Journal" throughout the quarter. The journal will consist of your reflections on news articles, television interviews, advertisements, tweets, Facebook posts, or movies about politics or politicians. Your reflections will be both descriptive and analytical. That is, you'll briefly describe content from a media event/s, but, more importantly, you'll also offer your own reflections and analysis. For the maximum possible points, relate the media you are describing to material from class or your text book. The assignment will demonstrate powerfully the fact that we are constantly surrounded by politics and political messages.

Beginning with **week one**, you'll be responsible for one journal entry per week, plus a final summary journal entry. All told, then, your journal will include nine (9) entries.

Each entry must be **two (2) (AND ONLY TWO) double-spaced typed pages in length**, using 12-point, Times New Roman font. Your journal will be due on Monday of weeks three, five, seven and nine. On Wednesday, November 14 a final journal entry which reflects on everything you've seen in the media over the last ten weeks is due. For this entry, you'll be asked to review your previous entries and reflect on how your views and understanding of media and politics have changed over the last ten weeks. Your final entry must be **at least three (3) double-spaced typed pages in length**, using 12-point, Times New Roman font.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any students with disabilities should contact the Disability Services Program to determine whether and to what extent services or accommodations are required for this course. If you think this notice might apply to you, please contact the Department of Disability Services at 303-871-2278 or visit the program's website at: <http://www.du.edu/disability/dsp/>

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER HONOR CODE

All members of the University of Denver are expected to uphold the values of *Integrity, Respect, and Responsibility*. These values embody the standards of conduct for students, staff, faculty, and administrators as members of the University community. The *Honor Code* is designed so that responsibility for upholding these principles lies with the individual as well as the entire community.

The *Honor Code* fosters and advances an environment of ethical conduct in the academic community of the University, the foundation of which includes the pursuit of academic honesty and integrity. Through an atmosphere of mutual respect we enhance the value of our education and bring forth the highest standard of academic excellence. Members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, administrators and trustees, must not commit any intentional misrepresentation or deception in academic or professional matters.

Violations of these policies include, but are not limited to:

- **Plagiarism**, including any representation of another's work or ideas as one's own in academic and educational submissions.
- **Cheating**, including any actual or attempted use of resources not authorized by the instructor(s) for academic submissions.
- **Fabrication**, including any falsification or creation of data, research or resources to support academic submissions.

The *University of Denver Honor Code Procedures Governing Students*, available at www.du.edu/honorcode, shall govern and be followed in the case of any student at the University who is accused of violating the *Honor Code*.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

(MMA P = Mass Media and American Politics, POI=News: The Politics of Illusion; www = a reading available from a website, BB= a reading available on our course Blackboard)

WEEK I

M: 9/9

Introduction & Syllabus

BB: Syllabus

www: "Let me explain why Miley Cyrus's VMA performance was our top story this morning," available at

<http://www.theonion.com/articles/let-me-explain-why-miley-cyrus-vm-a-performance-was,33632/>

www: Wallenstein, Andrew, "Why the Onion is wrong about CNN and Miley Cyrus," available at

<http://variety.com/2013/digital/news/why-the-onion-is-wrong-about-cnn-and-miley-cyrus-1200589821/>

W: 9/11

Media and Democracy

www: Sullivan, M., "Facts, Truth....and May the Best Man Win," available at,

<http://publiceditor.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/04/facts-truth-and-may-the-best-man-win/?hp>

www: "Journalism, satire, or just laughs: The Daily Show with Jon Stewart Examined, available at

<http://www.journalism.org/node/10953>

MMA P: Chapter 1

POI: Chapter 1

WEEK II

M: 9/16

Media Ownership & Regulation

MMA P: Chapter 2

W: 9/18

Media Ownership & Regulation (cont'd)

MMA P: Chapter 3

WEEK III

M: 9/23

Newsmaking, Reporting Routines & Gatekeeping

MMA P: Chapter 4

****Week 1 & 2 journal entries due****

W: 9/25

Newsmaking, Reporting Routines & Gatekeeping (cont'd)

MMA P: Chapter 5

POI: Chapter 2

WEEK IV

M: 9/30 **Newsmaking, Reporting Routines & Gatekeeping (cont'd)**
MMAP: Chapter 8
POI: Chapter 5

W: 10/02 **Newsmaking, Reporting Routines & Gatekeeping (cont'd)**
MMAP: Chapter 6
POI: Chapter 6

WEEK V

M: 10/07 **EXAM ONE**

****Week 3 & 4 journal entries due****

W: 10/09 **Media and Public Opinion**
MMAP: Chapter 7

WEEK VI

M: 10/14 **Media and Public Opinion**
POI: Chapter 3

W: 10/16 **Media and Public Opinion**
POI: Chapter 3 (cont'd)

WEEK VII

M: 10/21 **The Media and Politicians**
MMAP: Chapter 9

****Week 5 & 6 journal entries due****

W: 10/23 **The Media and Politicians**
POI: Chapter 4

WEEK VIII

M: 10/28 **Political Advertising**
BB: Kaid, L., "Political Advertising"

W: 10/30 EXAM TWO

WEEK IX

M: 11/04 Foreign Policy and Foreign Affairs
MMAP: Chapter 11

****Week 7 & 8 journal entries due****

W: 11/06 The Future of News
MMAP: Chapter 12

WEEK X

M: 11/11 The Future of News
POI: Chapters 7

W: 11/13 Course wrap-up & course evaluations
POI: Chapters 8

****Final journal entry due****

FINAL EXAM

MONDAY NOV. 18 12:00-2:50

CONGRATULATIONS!