

## PSC 321: Mass Media and American Politics DePaul University, Winter 2019

Professor: Ben Epstein  
Class Tues. & Thurs. 2:40pm - 4:10pm  
Room: Arts & Letters 414  
Office Hours: Wed 12:45-3:15 & by appt. on bluestar  
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Email: [bepstein@depaul.edu](mailto:bepstein@depaul.edu)  
Course Website:  
<http://mediaandamericanpolitics.wordpress.com>  
Course Blog:  
<http://psc321winter2019.blogspot.com/>

### **WELCOME TO MASS MEDIA AND AMERICAN POLITICS:**

Through this course we will explore the role of the media in American politics and the impact it has on government, policymaking, campaigning, and most importantly, the general public. This course will be organized into three sections. First, we will examine the structure of news media as a political and economic institution. This will include the historical evolution of media and how it is being transformed by the internet today. This section will cover fundamental concepts regarding political news media including the production of news, news bias(es), the current state of professional journalism, the freedom of the press, media effects (framing, agenda-setting, and priming), and the role of popular media. Next, we will explore the ways in which political actors, both inside and outside of government, try to shape the messages broadcast through media toward policy or electoral goals. During this part of the course we will pay particular attention to how various politicians, organizations, and campaigns try to influence, circumvent, or critique the media, current policy debates occurring throughout the American political landscape, and the status of the press in American politics. Finally, we will examine the effects that the media has on citizens, and the increasingly central role that the public is playing in political media in the internet era. We will conclude the course with a mind-blowing analysis of how all of these elements come together and look to the future of media, politics, and the intersection of the two.

### **REQUIRED TEXT:**

1. Doris A. Graber ed. *Media Power in Politics – Sixth Edition*. (Washington D.C.: CQ Press, 2011). (ISBN-13: 978-1-60426-610-8)
2. Handouts and scanned documents (available through class website or occasionally handed out or e-mailed to class)

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this quarter all students should be able to:

1. Understand the structure of American mass media as a political institution.
2. Connect the historical evolution of mass media in America to the uses, importance, and regulation of media today.
3. Analyze how the media influences political actors, public policy, and the public.
4. Evaluate how political actors attempt to shape, or bypass, the messages broadcast through American media.
5. Identify and evaluate various types of bias in the media.
6. Effectively and efficiently gather, interpret, and create political media by developing political media literacy skills.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS**

1. **Attendance and Participation:** Arrive on time to class and turn off all cell phones, etc. and be ready to actively discuss the readings and topics for the class. Quality participation also includes thorough note taking, active listening, civil, evidence-based discourse, and asking thoughtful questions.
2. **Academic Integrity:** Avoid Plagiarism – representing another's work as your own. Plagiarism is a very serious offense and will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment and possibly an F for the course. For more on plagiarism, and how to avoid it see the plagiarism tutorial at <http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php>

3. **Internet:** All students need to check the course website regularly. This is where you will find scanned documents, important and useful links, your course syllabus, and announcements for the course. The course website is NOT the D2L site (though there is a link on the D2L site), instead it can be found by visiting <http://mediaandamericanpolitics.wordpress.com/>. We will be communicating via e-mail at times throughout the course so make sure you are regularly checking the e-mail address you provided as well.
4. **Reading:** You should complete the assigned reading before the topic is discussed in class. Our course will move quickly and our class time will often use the readings as a point of departure. The reading load averages 60-80 pages per week. However, the weekly readings are not evenly distributed. Please plan ahead and take advantage of lighter reading weeks by reading ahead on upcoming topics. Some readings include articles published in peer-reviewed articles. For these articles work to understand the main questions asked, the methods used to try to answer them, and the main takeaways. You do not need to understand all of the methodological explanations to be able to understand the main findings and understand why. Read carefully and ask questions.

## **GRADING**

Your grade will be based on the following factors:

1. **Class Attendance, Participation, and Office Visit - 10%:** Class participation is based on active engagement during class including discussions, note taking, thoughtful questioning, and civil, evidence-based discourse. More than two times coming to class late or being absent are grounds for the lowering of the final grade, unless accompanied by an excused absence with documentation. In addition, each student must visit me during office hours at some point between the start of the second and end of the eighth week of class (end of Feb.). This is worth 5% of your grade. Walk-in office hours visits are always welcome but it is recommended to make an appointment via bluestar (or via email or in person), which get priority. The office hours visit will help me get to know more about you and to find out how to best direct the course and help you succeed.
2. **Political Blog - 10%:** Each week I will post an article, video clip, or discussion topic on the course blog for the upcoming week. You are expected to read the blog each week and add your personal comments, thoughts, and critical analysis. Please respond to the posts of your classmates as much as possible. Each entry should be no longer than ½ page (one long or two short paragraphs) and does not need to include outside research. Though these are not long entries they should be well thought out. NOTE: Each student is only expected to write 8 blog entries throughout the quarter but you must read the blog each week. Each entry must be made by 8 pm on Wednesday so that each student will be able to read all of the responses. Your comments can be original responses to the weekly prompt or replies to classmates' posts. The goal is to create an online dialogue that we can continue in class. All students should read the blog sometime between Wednesday night and class on Thursday. Keep in mind that your responses will be read by all of your classmates so proofread carefully. The blog can be found at: <http://psc321winter2019.blogspot.com/>
3. **Media News Presentation - 5%:** On the first week of class each student will choose one class in which they will present an important current news story related to major themes regarding the media and American politics. Your presentation can be about virtually anything related to the intersection of the media and American politics including (but not limited to) changes in journalism and media, how the media is covering/framing a particular political issue, how the media is influencing politics, the role of political actors in trying to manipulate the media, popular media and politics, or how regular citizens are accessing or creating political news. If you have a presentation topic in mind and want to check if it is a good choice feel free to e-mail me. You should select a news story or event that is current (occurring within the last two weeks) and is personally interesting. For your presentation you are expected to: 1) summarize your news story, 2) explain why it is important in the context of our course, and 3) lead the class in a brief

discussion of your news story by asking two thought-provoking questions and framing the event within our course content when appropriate. Visuals are only recommended if they are necessary for your presentation. They are not required. Each presentation will last approximately 6-8 minutes including discussion (2-3 minutes for the presentation followed by discussion).

4. **Quizzes on Readings - 10% (best four out of five - 2.5% each):** Over the course of the quarter we will have five quizzes based on the course readings. You are expected to have read the assigned readings before coming to class. The quizzes will occur at the beginning of class so please arrive to class on time. Each quiz will include four multiple choice and one short answer question based on the reading(s) for that class. The quizzes will be open note, not open book. You will be able to drop the worst score (or a missed quiz) and the remaining four will count. You will find that if you have done the readings the quizzes are straightforward. These quizzes are designed to keep you accountable for your reading as to help with all the other aspects of class including substantial discussion in class. Consider these quizzes as opportunities to excel and to show that you've done the reading. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.
5. **Research Project - 25%:** You will have a research project with multiple stages, including original research and a final paper due between the midterm and final. More details will be discussed in the upcoming weeks, but trust me, it's going to be great. Each part of the research project will be turned in using the D2L submission folder.
6. **Mid Term Exam - 20%:** Multiple choice, identifications, and essay question(s). All readings and class material is fair game. Review materials will be provided.
7. **Final Exam - 20%:** Multiple choice, identifications, and essay question(s). Again, all readings and class materials are fair game. Exam will include information covered after the midterm except the essay, which could be cumulative.

#### **GRADING SCALE**

A	93 - 100	B	83 - 86	C	73 - 76	D	63 - 66
A-	90 - 92	B-	80 - 82	C-	70 - 72	D-	60 - 62
B+	87 - 89	C+	77 - 79	D+	67 - 69	F	Below 60

#### **STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the:

- PLuS Program (for LD, AD/HD) at 773-325-1677, Student Center room 370, and/or
- The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-1677, Student Center room 370

#### **SOME GRADING TIPS**

1. Start strong because working hard in the beginning of the semester reduces the stresses and workload at the end.
2. Feel free to stop by my office hours if you have any questions or concerns (besides, it's required so why not?)
3. Extra Credit - Throughout the quarter if talks and papers come up that pertain to our class material it is possible that I will notify the class and allow for extra credit assignments that will be counted toward points on the midterm or final exam. You can also suggest such activities or events as long as they are accessible to everyone in the class. Also, you can get credit for up to 10 blog entries (2 beyond the required 8).
4. You are strongly encouraged to make use of the writing center to work on your writing. You can make appointments for fact-to-face, written feedback, screencast, online real-time, and conversation partner appointments. For more and how to sign up for appointments see:  
<https://condor.depaul.edu/writing/programs-writing-center.html> The writing center is located in Schmitt Academic Center (SAC) 212 and is open Mon. - Thurs. 10 AM to 5 PM. Fri. 10 AM to 3 PM. Phone: (773) 325-4272, online: [depaul.mywconline.com/](http://depaul.mywconline.com/)

## **COURSE OUTLINE, SCHEDULE, READING ASSIGNMENTS** (Subject to change)

### **1/8      Introduction**

#### **Part I: The Media – What It Was, What It Is, and Where It's Going**

**1/10    The Historical Evolution of Mass Media in the United States (all readings also available on course website)**

*Media Power in Politics: Ch. 1 by Bruce Bimber, pgs. 7 – 17*  
*Media Power in Politics: Ch. 4 by Michael Gurevitch, Stephen Coleman, and Jay G. Blumer, pgs. 45 – 53*  
Course Website: "Introduction: The Ideal of Objectivity," in *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* by Michael Schudson, pgs. 3 – 11  
Course Website: "The Social and Technological History of Political Communication Change," in *The Only Constant is Change: Technology, Political Communication, and Innovation Over Time* by Ben Epstein, pgs. 25-48

**1/15    Media as a Political Institution (all readings also available on course website)**

*Mass Media and American Politics* by Doris Graber and Johanna Dunaway: Ch. 1: Media Power and Government Control, pgs. 2 – 21.  
Course Website: "Guides for Analyzing Political Arguments," from *Thinking Critically About Media and Politics* by Donald Lazere, pgs. 17 – 21.  
Course Website: "Predictable Patterns of Political Rhetoric," from *Thinking Critically About Media and Politics* by Donald Lazere, pgs. 48 – 49.  
*Media Power in Politics: Ch. 33 by W. Lance Bennett and William Serrin, pgs. 395 – 404*

**1/17    Media and Journalism Today, and Hopefully Tomorrow**

*Mass Media and American Politics* by Doris Graber and Johanna Dunaway: Ch. 2: Ownership, Guidance, and Regulation of Media, pgs. 26 – 51.  
Course Website: "Amid Criticism, Support for Media's Watchdog Role Stands Out" from the Pew Research's Center for the People and the Press  
Course Website: "The State of the News Media 2018: Fact Sheets for (1) Digital News, (2) Newspapers, and (3) Public Broadcasting" from the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism: <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/state-of-the-news-media/>

**1/22    Media and Journalism Today, and Hopefully Tomorrow (contd.)**

*Media Power in Politics: Ch. 3 by Michael Schudson, pgs. 33 – 43*  
*Media Power in Politics: Ch. 5 by Alex S. Jones, pgs. 57 – 65*  
Course Website: "Wolfsfeld Ch. 3: No Such Things as Objective News," by Gadi Wolfsfeld, pgs. 47 - 71.

**1/24    News Making and News Reporting (Guest Speaker: Seth Kaplan Exec. Producer Fox 9, Minneapolis)**

Course Website: Bennett, W. Lance. 2012. "How Journalists Report the News" in *News: The Politics of Illusion*, Ninth Edition. New York: Pearson Longman. 153-184.  
Course Website: "The State of the News Media 2018: Fact Sheets for (1) Cable News, (2) Network News, (3) Local TV News, (4) Hispanic and African American News, and (5) Audio and Podcasting" from the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism: <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/state-of-the-news-media/>

**1/29    Media as a Policy Maker**

*Mass Media and American Politics* by Doris Graber and Johanna Dunaway: Ch. 6: Media as Policy Makers, pgs. 190 – 195 ,201 – 214.  
*Media Power in Politics: Ch. 29 by May G. Kennedy, Ann O'Leary, Vicki Beck, Katrina Pollard, and Penny Simpson, pgs. 343 – 352*

## Part II: Politics, Media, and Elections

### 1/31 The Regulation of Media: What it Means for Politics, and for the Public

Media Power in Politics: Ch. 31 by Irene Wu, pgs. 369 – 380

Media Power in Politics: Ch. 32 by Patricia Aufderheide, pgs. 383 – 393

Mass Media and American Politics by Doris Graber and Johanna Dunaway: Ch. 3: Press Freedom and Law, pgs. 56 – 68, 85 – 97.

### 2/5 The Media vs. Political Institutions: News From the President and Congress

Course Website: "Wolfsfeld Ch. 1: Political Power & Power over the Media," by Gadi Wolfsfeld, pgs. 9-21.

Course Website: "How the News Helped Nominate Trump," by Julia Azari in Political Communicaiton 33:4, pgs. 677 – 679

Course Website: "What We Should Really Be Asking About Media Attention to Trump," by Regina Lawrence and Amber Boydstun in Political Communication 34:1, pgs. 150 – 152

### 2/7 The Media vs. Political Institutions: (contd.)/Mid-Term Exam Review

Media Power in Politics: Ch. 21 by Patrick J. Sellers, pgs. 267 – 273

Course Website: "Who Gets Covered? Ideological Extremity and News Coverage of Members of the U.S. Congress," by Michael Wagner and Mike Gruszczynski in Journalism and Mass Communications Quarterly pgs. 1 – 18

### 2/12 MID-TERM EXAM

### 2/14 The Media and Elections

Mass Media and American Politics by Doris Graber and Johanna Dunaway: Ch. 12: Elections in the Digital Era, pgs. 386 – 420

Media Power in Politics: Ch. 14 by Darrell M. West, pgs. 185 – 192

Course Website: "Did We Create Trump," by Jack Shafer in Politico, also available at <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/04/did-media-reporters-create-trump-2016-campaign-213840>

### 2/19 The Media and Elections (continued)

Media Power in Politics: Ch. 15 by Thomas E. Patterson, pgs. 193 – 200

Media Power in Politics: Ch. 16 by Rachel Gibson, pgs. 203 – 213

Course Website: "Did Social Media Ruin Election 2016," by Sam Sanders, also available at <https://www.npr.org/2016/11/08/500686320/did-social-media-ruin-election-2016>

## Part III: Mass Media and the Public

### 2/21 The Media and the Public: The Role of Media in Democratic Societies

Media Power in Politics: Ch. 12 by Markus Prior, pgs. 153 – 163

Media Power in Politics: Ch. 35 by Jarol B. Manheim, pgs. 421 – 429

Course Website: "Political News in the Newsfeed," by Leticia Bode in Mass Communication and Society 19:1, pgs. 24 – 45.

### 2/26 The Media and the Public: Political Voices from Outside of Government

Media Power in Politics: Ch. 22 by Doug McAdam, pgs. 275 – 282

Course Website: "Our Demand is Simple: Stop Killing Us," Jay Caspian Kang in the New York Times Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/magazine/our-demand-is-simple-stop-killing-us.html>

**2/28 How the Media Shapes Public Opinion (The last week to earn full credit for your office visit)**  
 Course Website: "Wolfsfeld: Ch. 5: The Media Get You When You're Not Paying Attention," pgs. 97 - 118.  
 Course Website: "Attention as a Valuable Resource," by Natalie Jomini Stroud in *Political Communication* 34:3, pgs. 479 - 487  
 Course Website: "No Need to Watch: How the Effect of Partisan Media Can Spread via Interpersonal Discussions," By James Druckman, Matthew Levendusky, & Audrey McLain in *American Journal of Political Science* 62:1 (2018), pgs. 99-112

Recommended Reading:  
Course Website: "Red Media, Blue Media, and Purple Media: News Repertoires in the Colorful Media Landscape," by Staphanie Edgerly, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 59 (1), 2015. Pgs. 1-18  
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 7 by Benjamin Page, Robert Shapiro, and Glenn Dempsey, pgs. 85 - 98  
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 10 by Frank D. Gilliam Jr. and Shanto Iyengar, pgs. 129 - 138  
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 11 by Jill A. Edy and Patrick C. Meirick, pgs. 141 - 149

**3/5 The Internet and Politics Today and Tomorrow**  
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 36 by Helen Z. Margetts, pgs. 431 - 441  
 Course Website: "Curated Flows: A Framework for Mapping Media Exposure in the Digital Age," *Communication Theory* Vol. 26 (2016), by Kjerstin Thorson & Chris Wells.  
 Course Website: "Political Polarization & Media Habits," by Amy Mitchell, Jeffrey Gottfried, Jocelyn Kiley, and Katerina Eva Matsa at the Pew Research Center. (available at: <http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/>)

**3/7 Bias in US News Media Project Debrief**  
 Course Website: "Does the US Media Have a Liberal Bias? A Discussion of Tim Groseclose's "Left Turn: How Liberal Media Bias Distorts the American Mind," *Perspectives on Politics* 10(3), (2012), Read reviews by Brendan Nyhan, Nancy Rosenblum, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, pgs. 767 - 771, 780 - 785.

**3/12 How the Public Shapes the Media in the Internet Era**  
 Course Website: "Information Disorder: Definitions," by Hossein Derakhshan and Claire Wardle. Pgs. 5-12. (available at: <https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-Disinformation-Ecosystem-20180207-v2.pdf>)  
 Course Website: "People Don't Trust News Media - and This is Key to the Global Misinformation Debate," by Richard Fletcher and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen. Pgs. 13-17. (available at: <https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-Disinformation-Ecosystem-20180207-v2.pdf>)

Recommended:  
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 24 by Richard Davis, pgs. 293 - 300  
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 26 by Robert M. Entman, pgs. 315 - 323

**3/14 The Future of Media and Politics/ Final Exam Review**  
Mass Media and American Politics by Doris Graber and Johanna Dunaway: Ch. 14: Current Trends and Future Directions, pgs. 458 - 485.

**3/19 FINAL EXAM - Tuesday - 2:30 - 4:45pm**