Politics and the Media
CMN 325 (#50692) / PS 312 (#37069) / MACS 322 (#59025)
T Th 12:30pm–1:50pm
1066 Lincoln Hall
Spring 2013

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Course Overview
This course examines the processes of mass-mediated political communication in democratic societies. Although these processes can be studied in a variety of contexts, this course will focus primarily on the interaction between news media, audiences, and strategic communicators in the United States. Special emphasis will be given to the role of news media in democratic theory; the effects of media messages on audiences; the politics of media control; the role of political communication in policymaking and in time of war; the impact of new mass communication technologies; and factors shaping the construction of news such as journalistic routines, media economics, and the strategic management of news by politicians.

Course Objectives
This course has four primary objectives. By the end of this course, students should be able to:
• identify the roles played by news media in contemporary American politics
• appreciate the production of political news as a complex interaction between news organizations, audiences, and politicians
• understand how the “marketplace of ideas” constituted by mediated political communication affects democratic politics, and how the content of this marketplace is affected by the constraints under which the news media operate
• analyze critically a variety of news texts and processes

Required Reading
Students are required to obtain the following books, which are available at local bookstores (a copy of each will also be on reserve at the Undergraduate Library):


Students are also required to obtain a set of additional electronic readings which will be distributed over the course Moodle.

Course Moodle Site
This course has a Moodle site that will be the primary vehicle for receiving course assignments and distributing course-related materials in electronic form. The Moodle site can be accessed here (course enrollment required for access): https://learn.illinois.edu/
Assignments

Your final grade for this course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

- Two hourly exams (20% each; 40% of final grade)
- News analysis paper (20% for first section, 20% for second section; totals 40% of final grade)
- Final exam (20% of final grade)

The three examinations for the class draw equally from course readings and lecture material. The first and second exams may consist of multiple-choice, definition, short answer, short essay, and/or article analysis questions. The final exam will consist entirely of essay questions. This final exam will emphasize the material on news bias and strategic communication from the last third of the class, but since a proper understanding of this material requires a solid grasp of concepts and relationships covered in the earlier parts of the course, the final exam can be considered cumulative.

Students will write a news analysis paper in two sections over the course of the semester. Details on this assignment will be provided for each stage of the paper. Papers should be stapled and begin with a separate title page which includes the paper’s title, your name, and relevant course information. Your name and any other identifying information should appear nowhere else in the paper. I expect proper bibliographic references in the paper and prefer the APA author-date style—see http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/ for details). However, you may follow one of the other standard bibliographic reference systems (Chicago, MLA, Turabian, etc.) so long as you do so consistently. Papers should be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, stapled and set in a standard font (generally 10-12 point sizes).

Extra Credit Policy: There are no extra credit opportunities available to students taking this course.

Makeup Exam Policy: I understand that circumstances occasionally arise that require students to miss a scheduled exam. My policy is to allow those students to take a makeup exam that is more difficult than the scheduled in-class exam, since people taking the makeup will have had more time to prepare for it than did students taking the in-class exam. Makeup exams will consist entirely of short answer, essay, and analysis questions.

Late Assignment Policy: Unless you make prior arrangements with me, assignments turned in past deadline will lose one full letter grade for each day of class that the assignment is late (beginning with the day the assignment is due). Only in extraordinary circumstances will I grant extensions when the request is made in the 48-hour period before the time the assignment is due.

Special Accommodations: All qualified students entitled to special testing accommodations or assignment deadlines should let me know as early in the semester as possible so I can make appropriate arrangements. Do not be shy about asking for appropriate accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—if you have qualified for them, then you deserve to have them. I am committed to making sure that all students taking the course have equal opportunities for doing their best work on assignments and exams.
Expectations for Students

- Readings assigned for particular days should be read prior to coming to class.
- Conflicts with deadlines or other matters should be brought up with me well in advance of the conflict. I will do my best to find a remedy for the conflict, so long as I am given adequate time to do so.
- You must attend class. Class sessions will not normally be devoted to repeating material covered in readings. Rather, classes will typically relate relevant material not covered in the readings, use the readings as background for discussing particular examples, go deeper into details or specifics, or use the readings as a springboard for discussion.
- If you miss a class, you'll need to get a copy of lecture notes from another student. I don't provide copies of my notes or PowerPoint presentations to students.

Tentative Weekly Schedule for Class Topics and Reading Assignments

1/15 Introduction

1/17 When Good Media Go Bad


Video: "Media by Milosevic"

1/22, 24, 29 What Is the News Supposed to Do?


1/31, 2/5 Media Effects on Audiences 1: History of Media Effects Research


2/7, 12 Media Effects on Audiences 2: Contemporary Perspectives


Lodge, Milton, and Charles S. Taber. 2007. The rationalizing voter: Unconscious thought in
political information processing. Unpublished manuscript: Stony Brook University.


**EXAM**

**Audience Trends in News Consumption**


**Economics of the News-Making Process**

2/26 First Section of News Analysis Paper Due at Start of Class


**Structure of the News-Making Process**


3/12 Organizational Processes and News Norms

3/14, 19 NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

3/21, 26, 28 Organizational Processes and News Norms (continued)

4/2 SECOND EXAM

4/4, 9 News Bias

4/9 Second Section of News Analysis Paper Due at Start of Class
*Wolfsfeld, Gadi. 2011. Making Sense of Media and Politics. Pages 28-34 (which introduces the PMP cycle), chapter 3, “No such thing as objective news” and chapter 4, “Telling a good story”

4/11 NO CLASS MEETING—WATCH VIDEO FROM HOME INSTEAD
Video: “Buying the War”
*Wolfsfeld, Gadi. 2011. Making Sense of Media and Politics. Chapter 1, “Political power and power over the media” and chapter 2, “Political control and media independence”

4/16, 18 Strategic Communication Tactics
*Isikoff and Corn. 2007. Hubris. (pp. 1-210)

4/23, 25 Strategic Communication as Democratic Governance
*Isikoff and Corn. 2007. Hubris. (pp. 211-435)

4/30 Where Do We Go From Here?
*Wolfsfeld, Gadi. 2011. Making Sense of Media and Politics. “Introduction” (pp. 1-6) and “A Postscript” (pp. 119-122)

5/9 THIRD EXAM 7:00pm to 10:00pm 1066 Lincoln Hall