

**POL 3364: Politics and the Media**  
***Academic Community Engagement (ACE)***

**3 Credits**

**Fall 2017**

Location: CHSS 252

Class Time: 9:30-10:50 T/TH

Instructor: Dr. Heather K. Evans

Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 and by appointment

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**Course Description**

The primary focus of this course is on the role and impact of the media on US politics (Media is defined broadly to include the Internet, radio, television, and the various forms of print media.) Some of the topics that may be explored in the course include: the impact of the media on campaigns and election outcomes, the media as a source of political information, the agenda setting power of the media, the role of the “free press” in a democracy, and citizens’ relationship to the media. The course makes use of textbooks but also relies heavily on media product being offered each day through the various contemporary media.

**Academic Community Engagement (ACE)**

In this Academic Community Engagement (ACE) course, you will not only learn knowledge and skills about political communication, but also actively use them to make a difference in our community to improve the quality of life through providing information to the world by producing a podcast. This experience, it is hoped, will help you see yourself as a positive force in this world and deepen your understanding of political communication.

**Course Objectives**

- Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories of political persuasion, participation, and communication
- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate the relationship between media institutions and political institutions.
- Actively use the knowledge learned in class about political communication to make a difference in the community through providing information to the world through podcasting.

**Required Materials**

- Graber, Doris.(2015) *Mass Media and American Politics*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press. **ISBN: 9781452287287**
- West, Darrell M. (2014) *Air Wars*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press. **ISBN: 9781452239910**
- Additional readings will be posted on the course Blackboard site or available on the internet.

Please note that the course reading schedule is not set in stone, as I may add/drop/re-arrange the material based upon the pace and performance of the class.

## **Expectations**

This class will operate like a seminar. I will “lecture” infrequently. Most of our class time will be given over to discussion. At times, I will structure the discussion so that we talk about certain topics or readings. At other times, I hope we can have a more free-flowing discussion in which I play a minimal role. Your participation in class is essential. Three things will make our class meetings more enjoyable. First, before we meet, I expect that you will have completed all of the readings and any other assignments due that day. Second, on the day of class, please bring the readings with you so that we can refer to them. Third, come ready to speak up, to answer questions, and most importantly, to listen.

To encourage you to take coming to class and reading seriously, I will be employing a “cold-calling system” (the Socratic method). That is, in each session I will “randomly” select about one-sixth of the class roster and during our meeting I will call upon those selected. If I call on you and you are absent, or if you are clearly unprepared for class (it is obvious that you have never cracked the book/ have not been paying attention), I will make a note of it. Since this class meets three days a week, everyone in class gets two “freebies” – meaning that you can be unprepared to participate/have 2 absences (see below for further details) – but after that you lose 5% of your final attendance/participation grade for each mark against you.

If you do not already do so, I encourage you to take notes when you read (as this will likely pay off both in class and on exams). Please see me if you would like further suggestions and/or study tips.

*A note on participation:* Please be respectful of others (and their opinions) when participating in class discussion. Rude or inappropriate comments will not be tolerated.

## **Attendance/Participation Policy:**

Attendance is a requirement in this course. I will be taking attendance each day at the beginning of class. Everyone in class can have 2 absences (or two days when they are not prepared – see above), but after the two absences, you will lose 5% of your final attendance/participation grade for each absence. Students who do not miss class and are prepared throughout the semester when called on will receive 5 extra points on their final exam grade.

*If it is found that someone else in class is signing the attendance sheet for you, you will receive a zero for attendance and participation.*

If you miss class due to a family emergency and would like for that absence to be excused, you must submit your paperwork to the Dean of Students office. I will excuse absences only with a letter from the Dean of Students.

| <b>Course Grades:</b>      | <b>Percent of Grade</b> | <b>Due Date</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Attendance/Participation   | 15%                     | Ongoing         |
| Podcast                    | 20%                     | November 27     |
| Idea                       | 2%                      | September 19    |
| Outline                    | 3%                      | October 5       |
| Comparing Media Assignment | 20%                     | October 26      |
| Midterm Exam               | 20%                     | October 22      |
| Final Exam                 | 20%                     | December 12     |

### **Exams**

The midterm and the final exams will both be comprised of short answer/essay questions. Material for each test will come from class lectures, discussions, and readings. *The final exam will not be cumulative.* There are no make-up exams given in this course.

### **Podcast – the Academic Community Engagement (ACE) portion.....**

Using a computer microphone and the program called Audacity (or another program you are familiar with), you will produce a podcast this semester related to the material we are covering. You will be placed in groups of 3-4 students and create a podcast related to Media & Politics. Each student will work on this podcast for at least nine hours.

You will be sharing your podcasts with the class in our PodcastFest on November 28th. Please share a copy with me by November 27<sup>th</sup> so I can prepare ahead of time and minimize downtime between podcasts. On the day of the PodcastFest, please also turn in a formal bibliography listing every source you used when preparing your podcast. You will be graded on the quality of your analysis, the professionalism of your presentation, your ability to engage your audience, and how much work you did to help your group. You will also write a reflection where you will reflect on this project (what you liked, what you didn't). There will also be a "people's choice" aspect to the grade: the top two podcasts (depending on the number of entries) as chosen by the class, will receive a grade boost. A list of links to exemplars of great podcasts will be available on Blackboard in case you are unfamiliar with the genre. The podcast project will be worth a total of 25% of your course grade.

*We will discuss the podcast assignment in more detail on August 29<sup>th</sup>, including due dates for the smaller assignments (idea, outline, bibliography).*

### **Comparing Media Content Assignment**

You will write a 6-9 page paper comparing and contrasting news content across organizations. More details about this writing assignment will be handed out and discussed in class. This assignment should be submitted electronically to Blackboard by 11:59pm on October 26<sup>th</sup>..

Late assignments? I will accept written assignments up to one week late, but assignments will lose 10 points for each day that they are late.

### **Cell Phones and Laptops**

Cell phones and laptops may be used in class to "live tweet" to our class hashtag #evansmedia. This policy will be re-evaluated throughout the semester.

**Instructor Evaluations**

Students will be given the opportunity to complete a course/instructor evaluation near the end of the course.

**Academic Dishonesty**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

**Americans with Disabilities Act**

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

**Religious Holidays**

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

**Classroom Rules of Conduct and other policies**

Students are expected to abide by the Classroom Rules of Conduct as outlined by the Dean of Students: [http://www.shsu.edu/students/StudentGuidelines2007\\_2008.pdf](http://www.shsu.edu/students/StudentGuidelines2007_2008.pdf)

Other policies can be located at <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus>

## **Schedule of Readings**

8/24 - Introduction to the Course

8/29 – HURRICANE

8/31 - HURRICANE

9/5 - Monica Chadha, Alex Avila, and Homero Gil de Zuniga. “Listening in: Building a Profile of Podcast Users and Analyzing their Political Participation.” *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 9: 388-401 (2012).

**Podcast Assignment Discussed in Full Details (you won’t want to miss this!)**

### **Part 1: The Role and Function of the News Media in American Democracy**

9/7 - Media Power and Government Control (Graber)

Ownership, Regulation and Guidance of Media (Graber)

9/12 – Press Freedom and the Law (Graber)

News Making and News Reporting Routines (Graber)

### **The Investigative Nature of the News**

9/14 – Video (All the President’s Men)

9/19 – Video (All the President’s Men)

Weaver, David, Maxwell McCombs, and Charles Spellman. (1975) “Watergate and the Mass Media: A Case Study of Agenda Setting.” *American Politics Quarterly* 3(4). (Available on Blackboard)

**Podcast Ideas Due by class time!**

### **Burglar Alarms and the Media as Policy Maker**

9/21 – Zaller, John. 2003. “A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen.” *Political Communication* 20: 109-130

Bennett, W. Lance. 2003. “The Burglar Alarm That Just Keeps Ringing: A Response to Zaller.” *Political Communication* 20: 131-138

9/26 – The Media and Policy Makers (Graber)

## **Part 2: Media Effects and Manipulation**

### **Media and Race**

9/28 – Gilliam, Franklin D. and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. “Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public.” *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3): 560-573.

Pyszczynski, Tom, Matt Motyl, Carl Henthorn, and Kristel Gerow (2010) “Is Obama the Anti-Christ? Racial Priming, Extreme Criticisms of Barack Obama, and Attitudes Towards the 2008 U.S. Presidential Candidates.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 46:863-866.

### **Ethics, Manipulative Journalism, Agenda Setting**

10/3 - Zaller, John. (1998) “Monica Lewinsky’s Contribution to Political Science” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31(2): 182-189.

Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Bruce A Williams. (1994) “Constructing Public Opinion: The Uses of Fictional and Nonfictional Television in Conversations about the Environment” *Communication Research* (Available on Blackboard)

### **Political Socialization, Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors**

10/5 – Media Influence on Attitudes and Behaviors (Graber)

Weaver, David. “What Voters Learn from Media.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 546 (July): 34-47.

### **Podcast outlines due by class time**

10/10 – Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A Clawson, Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Controversy and Its Effect on Tolerance.” *American Political Science Review* 91(3): 567-83

### ***Exam Review***

10/12 – **Midterm Exam**

**10/17 - No class – work in groups on your podcasts & Comparing Media Content Assignment**

**10/19 - No class – work in groups on your podcasts & Comparing Media Content**

## **Assignment**

### Election Campaigns

10/24 - Air Wars – Chapters 1-5

Daly, Michael “Flower Power” Newsweek (Available on Blackboard)

10/26 – Air Wars – Chapters 6-10

### **Comparing Media Content Assignment Due by Midnight on Blackboard**

10/31 – Jamieson, Kathleen Hall and Paul Waldman, “The Morning After: The Effect of the Network Call for Bush.” *Political Communication* 19:113-118.

Hart, Peter, “Target Dean: Re-establishing the Establishment.” From Extra! March-April 2004.

11/2 - Druckman, James N. 2004. “Priming the Vote: Campaign Effects in a U.S. Senate Election.” *Political Psychology* 25(4): 577-594.

Evans, Cordova, and Sipole (2014) “Twitter Style: An Analysis of How House Candidates Used Twitter during their 2012 Campaigns.” *PS: Political Science and Politics*

11/7 – Kahn, Kim Fridkin and Patrick J. Kenney. (1999) “Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the Relationship between Negativity and Participation.” *American Political Science Review* 93(4): 866-889.

Begala, Paul. “More Attack Ads, Please” Newsweek (Available on Blackboard)

Krupnikov, Yanna. (2014) “How Negativity Can Increase and Decrease Voter Turnout: The Effect of Timing.” *Political Communication*. 31: 444-466

### Adversarial Relationships between the Media, President, & Congress

11/9 – Struggle for Control: News From the Presidency/Congress (Graber)  
Auletta, Ken, “Fortress Bush,” *New Yorker* Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

Kedrowski, Karen M. (1996) “How Members of Congress Use the Media to Influence Public Policy” (Available on Blackboard)

## **Part 3: New Media, New Directions**

### **Is the Media Destroying American Culture? Dissatisfaction with the Media**

11/14 – Putnam, Robert D. 2000. Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community New York: Simon & Schuster, Chapter 13. (Available on Blackboard)

J. L. Leibhart “Why Partisans See Mass Media as Biased,” *Communication Research* 31(2004): 623-641.

Feldman, Lauren, Edward W. Maibach, and Connie Roser-Renouf. (2011) “Climate on cable: The nature and impact of global warming coverage on Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC.” *International Journal of Press Politics*.

11/16 - Jay Rosen: “Clowns to the Left of Me, Jokers to the Right: On the Actual Ideology of the American Press.” Available at:  
[http://archive.pressthink.org/2010/06/14/ideology\\_press.html](http://archive.pressthink.org/2010/06/14/ideology_press.html)

Poupard, Vincent “How Camera Angles Affect your Feelings About Politicians” (Available on Blackboard)

Also visit [newsbusters.org](http://newsbusters.org) and [Mediamatters.org](http://mediamatters.org)

11/21- Thanksgiving Break

11/23 – Thanksgiving Break

**11/28 – PodcastFest!**

### **Soft News, Infotainment, and their Consequences**

11/30- Cao, Xisoxia (2010). “Hearing it from Jon Stewart: The Impact of the Daily Show on Public Attentiveness to Politics.” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 22(1): 26-46.

Prior, Markus (2005) “News Versus Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 577-592.

Exam Review

### **Final Exam Week**

**12/7 – Final Exam 9:30am**