

Course Syllabus
PSC 401B: Media and Politics

Fall 2019

Class Time: Tue, Thu 8:30 AM – 9:45 AM

Class Location: WRI-C 237

Professor: Kenneth Miller

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Office: WRI-A 208

Office Hours:

Tue, Thu 9:45 AM – 11:15 AM

and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

The media are components of American politics. The press has earned the moniker of “the fourth estate” in an acknowledgement of media’s critical role in a healthy democracy. This course examines the way in which modern mass media have altered the dynamics of democratic politics in the United States. More generally, we will be concerned with how news is made, how media influences politics and vice versa, and how the media we are exposed to influences our attitudes and how our attitudes influence which media we are exposed to.

In this course students will meet the following learning objectives:

1. Understand the processes that drive mass media coverage of political events from the perspectives of media consumers, media professionals, and political figures.
2. Understand the consequences of the media environments for how individuals understand politics.
3. Develop a critical eye towards media coverage, politicians’ efforts to shape news reporting, and individuals’ consumption of political media.

Course Format

The course will be mostly lecture, but discussions will be common. Feel free to stop e ask questions when things are unclear, or if you would like more information on a subject. It will be a good idea to try to stay aware of current political news, since I will probably bring up current events for discussion in class as things occur that are related to the course.

Attendance

The lectures parallel but do not repeat the readings and discussion of the readings is an important part of this course, so not attending class is a bad idea. Furthermore, in-class quizzes and polls (see below) cannot be made up, so not attending class carries the risk of losing points.

Evaluation

There will be three components to the overall course grade: two exams worth 60% (30% each), a short writing assignment worth 20%, and a quiz and poll component worth 20% in total. There is no extra credit in the course.

Exams: 30% × 2

There will be two exams in this course, each worth 30% of your course grade. The exams will be a mix of closed ended (e.g. multiple choice) and open ended (e.g. short answer and essay) question formats.

Writing assignment: 20%

In order to apply what we discuss in class, you will write a short paper analyzing a political entity's usage of media. The political entity could be an office holder, a candidate, an interest group, a political party, or perhaps something else. Applying course concepts, identify what this person or group is trying to accomplish with their communications and assess how effective they are in achieving their goals. What went right and what went wrong?

The papers must use Times New Roman 12-point font, one-inch margins and should be about 5 pages in length, not including tables, figures, and bibliography. All papers should use Chicago/APSA parenthetical citation style (I will provide the APSA style guide on the course Canvas page). Tables and figures should be clean, clear, labeled, and professional in appearance.

Over the course of the semester I will discuss this assignment in greater detail.

Quizzes and Polls: 20%

Throughout the semester many classes will include a short quiz or poll. Quizzes will cover the readings due for that class day or material covered in the previous class. Polls are a bit different in that you get credit simply for answering. There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes, but the lowest three grades will be dropped. For example, if we had 9 polls and quizzes in the semester and a student has 5 with 5/5, 1 with 3/5, 1 with 2/5, and missed 2 (0/5), then the student drops the two that she missed and the 2/5 score, so the overall grade is counted as: $(5 \times 1) + (1 \times .6) / 6 = 93\%$. You should view the policy of dropping the three lowest three scores as something like an allotment of personal time off and an insurance policy against a bad day or two. Use your three drops judiciously.

Calculating Course Grades:

Overall course grades are assigned according to the following scale:

93.0% - 100%	A	77.0% - 79.9%	C+
90.0% - 92.9%	A-	73.0% - 76.9%	C
87.0% - 89.9%	B+	70.0% - 72.9%	C-
83.0% - 86.9%	B	60.0% - 69.9%	D
80.0% - 82.9%	B-	0% - 59.9%	E

Final course grades are calculated based on a percentage rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent. For example, a final score of 92.95 is rounded to 93.0 and is an A, while an 82.91 is rounded to 82.9 and is a B-.

Course Materials

There is one textbook required for this course:

Media Politics, A Citizen's Guide 4th Edition by Shanto Iyengar. Brookings Institution

We will also draw from other texts and selected readings, and these will be provided as PDFs on the course Canvas page.

Course Schedule

Because some topics may run long and some topics may wrap up a little more quickly the precise dates on this schedule are subject to change. If changes to the schedule occur, I will inform everyone in class and online. Book chapters for each topic are listed below in the schedule. Additional articles will sometimes be assigned and will be posted on the course Canvas page.

8/27: Introduction

Note: no class on Thu. 8/29

Sep 3 & Sep 5: Media systems in a comparative perspective

- Iyengar, Ch. 2
- Graber and Dunaway, Ch. 2

Sep 10 & Sep 12: Media and the Law

- Graber and Dunaway, Ch. 3

Sep 17 & Sep 19: Where Americans get news

- Iyengar, Ch. 3

Sep 24 through Oct 3: The evolving nature of journalism

- Iyengar, Ch. 4
- Graber and Dunaway, Chs. 5 and 6

Oct 8 & Oct 10: Incivility, negativity, and bias

- Graber and Dunaway, Ch. 13

Oct 17: EXAM 1

Oct 22 through Oct 31: Campaigns in the media

- Iyengar, Chs. 6 and 7
- Graber and Duanway, Ch. 12

Nov 5 & Nov 7: The Web and social media

- Iyengar, Ch. 5

Nov 12 through Nov 26: Media and public opinion

- Iyengar, Ch. 8
- Graber and Duanway, Ch. 11

Dec 3 & Dec 5: Governing through the media

- Iyengar, Ch. 9

Dec 10 8:00 AM - FINAL EXAM

Class Policies and Procedures

Classroom Environment: I will do my part to start and end class on time: we will start at 8:30 AM and end by 9:45 AM. Please do your part and do not make a habit of arriving late to class or leaving class early. I encourage you to engage in class discussions, ask questions, and respond when I ask you questions. However, side discussions during lecture are especially distracting for me and make my job a lot harder.

Technology: Laptops and tablets are welcome in class for taking notes (although a growing body of research indicates that taking notes by hand is associated with better retention of material and deeper understanding). Using laptops and tablets in a manner that is distracting to the instructor or other students, or in an otherwise inappropriate way is not acceptable. If students report distracting behavior with laptops and tablets this policy may change and the devices may be banned from the class. Turn off all mobile phones prior to entering the classroom. Texting and messaging on laptops and tablets during class is not acceptable.

Readings: You should perform the readings listed on the syllabus in preparation for the week on which they are listed. In other words, the reading assigned for the week of September 3 and 5 should be done before attending class on September 3. Class discussion is structured around the readings, so not doing the reading before class makes it unlikely that you will be able to meaningfully contribute to discussions. The lectures will often be used to highlight material different than the reading, so it is necessary to do both the reading and regularly attend class to be fully prepared for quizzes.

Communication: The best way to communicate with me is during office hours. I encourage you to visit me in office hours for any reason: you are having trouble with something, you have questions, you want to discuss your research paper, you want to talk politics, you have a good restaurant recommendation for me, or most anything else. Email correspondence is also welcome. Please format your emails as business correspondence, with a greeting and signature. I will try to get to your emails within 24 hours or, at the latest, during my next scheduled office hours unless the answer to a question is in the syllabus or was discussed in class (in which case you should consult a classmate). I may also answer through a general email to the class rather than writing you back personally if your question reflects a general concern. If your question via email requires a long or complicated response, I may ask that we set a time to meet instead. I am also happy to schedule an appointment with you if you cannot make my office hours.

Make-ups and Late Assignments: Make-ups are only offered for the following circumstances: (1) University sanctioned events (verification required); (2) religious observations (see University policy, below); or (3) extreme emergencies, and I am the sole arbiter of what constitutes an extreme emergency. If you intend to miss class for a religious holiday, you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days in advance. **NB**: Some things that do not qualify for make-ups are: vacation travel, light illness (i.e. a common cold). Late assignments will be docked 5 percentage points per day.

Procedures for Dealing with Grade/Evaluation Concerns: Grade/evaluation concerns will only be considered if the following procedure is followed: All grade complaints must be typed and must clearly express the student's specific concerns. These written statements must be accompanied by citations of support from course materials, i.e. readings, textbook, and/or lecture notes, in order to ensure accuracy. Written statements will not be considered until one week after the assignment is returned to students. This allows the student time to reread his/her answers and think carefully about what improvements could have been made. Grievances will not be considered once two weeks have passed. For example, if I return a graded assignment on Monday, the student must submit a complaint before the Friday of the following week. Once class is over on that Friday, no complaints will be considered for that assignment. In other words, there is a one-week window to submit a written statement. Since class time is limited, I will only deal with questions or concerns during scheduled office hours. Finally, submitting a grade grievance will result in a complete re-grade of the assignment.

University Policies

Academic Misconduct: Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Academic Misconduct Policy (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

Copyright: The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under

University policies. Additional information can be found at:
<http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC): The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to me during office hours so that we may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach me before or after class to discuss your accommodation needs.

Religious Holidays Policy: Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the end of the first two weeks of classes, September 5, 2014, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit:
<http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

Incomplete Grades: The grade of I (incomplete) can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

Tutoring: The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling 702-895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>.

UNLV Writing Center: One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of

any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>

Rebelmail: By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu.