

COM/PSC 388: Media Power & American Politics

Fall 2004
Mon/Wed: 1:30-2:45 PM
Moyer 109

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Office Hours: Dr. Sullivan: M, 3:00-4:00 pm; T/Th 11:00 am-12:00 pm & by appointment
Dr. Mathews-Gardner: T/Th 2:00-3:00 pm & by appointment

Course Overview & Objectives:

The process through which Americans learn about, elect, and provide feedback to public officials is shaped by mass media, particularly television. What effect does this have on our understanding of the candidates, our interest in politics, and in our political participation (or lack thereof)? In this course, we will learn about how the mass media are organized in the United States and mediate the political process. We will be especially concerned with the impact of the media on presidential campaigns, public opinion, voting behavior, and participatory democracy. One of the primary goals of the course is to explore and discuss the role that the media play—and the role they *should* play—in political life, and to develop critical abilities that will enable us to analyze the political information we receive from television. Toward these ends, students will conduct their own analysis of news coverage of the 2004 presidential campaigns. In addition, this course will feature a keynote speaker with direct insight into Media Power & American Politics—attendance at this event, and a reflective paper in response, is required.

Required Texts:

The following are required and are available at the Muhlenberg College Bookstore for purchase:

1. Graber, D.A. (2001). *Mass media and American politics*, 6th Edition. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. Identified in the syllabus as [MEDIA].
2. Patterson, T. (1994). *Out of order*. New York: Vintage Books. Identified in the syllabus as [ORDER].
3. West, D.M. (2001). *Air wars: Television advertising in election campaigns, 1952-2000*, 3rd Edition. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. Identified in the syllabus as [WARS].
4. *Course Pack* for COM/PSC 388. Identified in the syllabus as [CP].

The following is also required, and will be distributed in class, free of charge:

5. Jamieson, K.H. (2000). *Everything you think you know about politics...and why you're wrong*. New York: Basic Books. Identified in the syllabus as [POLITICS]. [To be distributed in class].

Course Requirements:

Attendance: Attending every class is mandatory and extremely important (especially since a portion of your final grade is due to class participation and you cannot participate if you are not present!). Official medical excuses or other documented extraordinary circumstances (such as illness or death in the family) only are accepted as excuses for class absences.

Deadlines: All assignments throughout the semester are due no later than the date and time listed on the syllabus. Late papers will be dropped one full letter grade for each day the assignment is late (which begins one minute after the time printed in the syllabus). There are no makeups for exams.

Academic Behavior Code: You should be familiar with the rules concerning the Academic Behavior Code (as specified in your Muhlenberg College Handbook, pp. 44-48) and the consequences of violating this code.

Assignments & Grading:

All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, on standard 8.5 x 11 inch white paper using 12-point font type, and using APA Style Procedures (to be explained by Drs. Sullivan & Mathews-Gardner in class). All written assignments should be completed individually by each student unless otherwise noted. You should be familiar with all readings during the weeks for which they are assigned.

Class Participation: Your participation and discussion in class is a crucial part of the success of this course and will be an important part of your final grade (10%). In addition, every student in the course is required to attend Thomas Patterson's lecture on Thursday, October 21st. Students should be aware that attendance is only one aspect of class participation. Preparedness to speak and participate in classroom discussion is also extremely important. Because the 2004 presidential campaign will be a prime focus of this course, students are strongly advised to read a national newspaper (such as the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*) on a daily basis.

Students should also be familiar with the presidential candidates for the 2004 election. More information on each of the major candidates can be found at their campaign sites on the World Wide Web:

<http://www.johnkerry.com> (John Kerry – Democrat)

<http://www.georgewbush.com> (George W. Bush – Republican)

<http://www.votenader.com> (Ralph Nader – Independent)

Response Papers: Students will be required to write two brief response papers, one of which will follow Thomas Patterson's lecture on Thursday, October 21st. Paper topics will be distributed in advance of the due date.

News Analysis Paper: This is the more substantial paper of the semester, where students will conduct their own analysis of press coverage of the 2004 presidential campaign. Students will use content analysis techniques to develop their own thesis about the coverage and its potential effects on voters. Details about the paper will be available on an assignment sheet to be handed out in class.

Exams: The two exams will be based on the readings, class discussions, and videos. The midterm exam will be in-class on Wednesday, October 6th and will consist of multiple choice, identifications, and short answer. There will be no makeups for the midterm exam. The final exam will be in take-home essay format and will be distributed in class 7-9 days before the due date listed in the syllabus.

Grading:

Midterm Exam	20%
Class Participation	10%
Response Papers (2 @ 10% each)	20%
News Analysis Paper	20%
Final Exam (Take-Home)	30%
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>100%</u>

Course Schedule:

Please keep in mind that this schedule may be subject to slight changes or modifications throughout the semester.

WEEK 1; AUGUST 30-SEPTEMBER 1: INTRODUCTION: MEDIA AS A POLITICAL INSTITUTION

Topics:

How do the media operate?
 Importance of media in political life
 Historical background: The press as an American political institution

Reading:

- Chapter 1 [MEDIA]

WEEK 2; SEPTEMBER 6-8: THE PRESS – YESTERDAY & TODAY

Topics:

Political Development of the American News Media
 What is the function of free expression in a democratic society?
 Should press freedom be accompanied by press responsibilities?

Readings:

- U.S. Constitution, widely available.
- The Hutchins Commission Report, "A Free and Responsible Press," [CP]
- "Two Hundred Years of Press Freedom," Jamieson/Patterson debate, *Political Communication* [CP]
- "Veto Message," Ronald Reagan's message to the Senate [CP]
- Patricia Aufderheide, "Communications Policy and the Public Interest" [CP]

WEEK 3; SEPTEMBER 13-15: LEGAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE MEDIATopics:

From Partisan Press to the National Entertainment State
 Re-examining Freedom of the Press
 Costs and benefits of private, for-profit media system

Readings

- Chs. 2 & 3 [MEDIA]
- Bagdikian, "The U.S. Media: Supermarket or Assembly Line?" [CP]

Video:

- Now...with Bill Moyers, "Deregulation and the Telecom Act of 1996"

WEEK 4; SEPTEMBER 20-22: POLITICAL REPORTING & POLITICAL REPORTERSTopics:

Who are news reporters today?
 How do reporters do their jobs?
 Objectivity, news values, & socialization of reporters
 Reporter/source relationship

Readings:

- Chs. 4 & 5 [MEDIA]

WEEK 5; SEPTEMBER 27-29: POLITICIANS & THE PRESSTopics:

Struggles for control between politicians & the news media
 Information subsidies in political campaigns
 Content analysis of campaign news

Readings:

- Chs. 6 & 9 [MEDIA]
- Shoemaker & Reese, "Analyzing media content" [CP]

Video:

- "The War Room" [in-class]

WEEK 6: OCTOBER 4-6: ANALYZING MEDIA CONTENTTopics:

Looking for patterns in news media content

Readings:

- Shoemaker & Reese, "Patterns of media content" [CP]

** WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6 – MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS **

WEEK 7; OCTOBER 11-13: CRITIQUING THE PRESS & POLITICAL REPORTINGTopics:

Function of the press in political campaigns
 News schemas: Game and governing

Readings:

- Prologue & Chs. 1-3 [ORDER]

WEEK 8; OCTOBER 20: PRESS CRITIQUES (II) & SUGGESTIONS FOR REFORMTopics:

Can news give us the information we need to make informed political choices?
 Improving the system of election coverage
 Campaign finance reform & the media game

Reading:

- Chs. 4-6 [ORDER]

NO CLASS ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 18 – FALL BREAK

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21: THOMAS PATTERSON ON CAMPUS**WEEK 9; OCTOBER 25-27: CIRCUMVENTING THE PRESS: POLITICAL ADVERTISING AND NEW MEDIA**Topics:

History of presidential campaign advertising in the U.S. & its current role in American politics
 Campaign advertising in 1988, 1992, 2000
 Tactics of political ads: Visual & verbal argumentation

Readings:

- Jamieson, "Broadsides to broadcasts" [CP]
- Chs. 1 & 2 [WARS]

Video:

- "The Living Room Campaign" [in-class]
- Campaign advertisements from 1988, 1992, & 2000 [in-class]

WEEK 10; NOVEMBER 1-3: POLITICAL ADVERTISING & CAMPAIGN NEWSTopics:

Negative vs. positive advertising
 News coverage of negative campaigning

Reading:

- Chs. 3, 4, 6 [WARS]

Video:

"Free Speech for Sale" (Bill Moyers) [in-class]

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2004: ELECTION DAY!

WEEK 11; NOVEMBER 8-10: POLITICAL ADVERTISING – EFFECTS ON DEMOCRACY?Topics:

Effects of campaign advertising on voters – A cynical public?
 Internet advertising and effects?

Readings:

- Chs. 5, 7, 10 [WARS]
- Selections from Jamieson (TBA) [POLITICS]

**** WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10: NEWS ANALYSIS PAPER DUE IN CLASS ****

WEEK 12; NOVEMBER 15-17: EFFECTS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON VOTERS – DO CAMPAIGNS MATTER?Topics:

Voter learning and political campaigns
 Do campaigns change minds or simply reinforce existing attitudes about candidates?

Readings:

- Chs. 7 & 8 [MEDIA]
- Selections from Jamieson (Chs. 1, 3, 7) [POLITICS]

WEEK 13; NOVEMBER 22-24: AGENDA-SETTING & FRAMING – SWAYING THE ELECTORATETopics:

Agenda-setting
 Framing of political issues & public opinion

Reading:

- McCombs & Estrada, “The news media & pictures in our heads” [CP]
- Iyengar, “Framing responsibility for political issues” [CP]

***** NOVEMBER 25, 2004 – THANKSGIVING *****

WEEK 14; NOVEMBER 29-DECEMBER 1: PRIMING VOTERS’ ATTITUDESTopics:

Framing and public opinion
 Priming – Evaluating our political leaders

Reading:

- Miller & Krosnick, “Anatomy of news media priming” [CP]
- Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, & Wright, “Crime in black and white: The violent, scary world of local news” [CP]
- Iyengar & Simon, “News coverage of the Gulf crisis and public opinion” [CP]

WEEK 15; DECEMBER 6-8: THE PUBLIC AGENDA: GAINING ACCESS & CONTROLLING THE DEBATETopics:

How can groups gain access to the debate with their issues?

Course summary: How to improve democracy in a modern media society?

Review for final exam

Reading:

- Ch. 12 [MEDIA]
- Pertschuk, "Putting media effects research to work: Lessons for community groups who would be heard" [CP]
- Winett, "Advocate's guide to framing memos" [CP]

CLASSES END**FINAL EXAM PERIOD BEGINS**

** WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15 – FINAL EXAM DUE BY 4:30 PM **

Media Power & American Politics Coursepack Readings (in the order they appear in the syllabus)

- Commission on Freedom of the Press. (1947). *A Free and Responsible Press: A General Report on Mass Communication: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Magazines, and Books*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Two hundred years of press freedom: Has the promise been fulfilled? (1993). *Political Communication* 10, 3-16.
- Reagan, R. (1987). Message to the Senate Returning Without Approval the Fairness in Broadcasting Bill, June 19, 1987. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Aufderheide, P. (2000). Communications policy and the public interest. In D.A. Graber (Ed.). *Media Power in Politics* (4th ed.; pp. 351-362). Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Bagdikian, B. (1997). The U.S. media: Supermarket or assembly line? In S. Iyengar & R. Reeves (Eds.). *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America* (pp. 66-76). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Shoemaker, P. & Reese, S. (1996). Analyzing media content & Patterns of media content. In *Mediating the Message* (2nd ed.; pp. 27-62). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Jamieson, K.H. (1996). *Packaging the presidency* (3rd ed.; pp. 3-39). New York: Oxford University Press.
- McCombs, M. & Estrada, G. (1996). The news media & pictures in our heads. In S. Iyengar & R. Reeves (Eds.). *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America* (pp. 237-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Iyengar, S. (1996). Framing responsibility for political issues. In S. Iyengar & R. Reeves (Eds.). *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America* (pp. 276-282). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miller, J.M. & Krosnick, J.A. (1996). Anatomy of news media priming. In S. Iyengar & R. Reeves (Eds.). *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America* (pp. 258-275). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gilliam, F.D., Jr., Iyengar, S., Simon, A. & Wright, O. (1996). Crime in black and white: The violent, scary world of local news. In S. Iyengar & R. Reeves (Eds.). *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America* (pp. 287-295). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Iyengar, S. & Simon, A. (1996). News coverage of the Gulf crisis and public opinion. In S. Iyengar & R. Reeves (Eds.). *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America* (pp. 248-257). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pertschuk, M. (1996). Putting media effects research to work: Lessons for community groups who would be heard. In S. Iyengar & R. Reeves (Eds.). *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America* (pp. 391-400). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Winett, L. (1996). Advocate's guide to framing memos. In S. Iyengar & R. Reeves (Eds.). *Do the media govern? Politicians, voters, and reporters in America* (pp. 420-431). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.