PSC 321: Mass Media and American Politics  
DePaul University, Spring 2015

Professor: Ben Epstein  
Email: bepstein@depaul.edu  
Class Tues. & Thurs. 9:40am – 11:10am  
Course Website: http://mediaandamericanpolitics.wordpress.com  
Room: Arts and Letters Room 112  
Office Hours: Tues. 3 – 4, Wed. 3 – 4:30 & by appt.  
Office Location: 990 W. Fullerton Room 2107  

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, and 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 section we will pay particular attention to how various politicians, organizations, and campaigns try to influence, or circumvent the media, and current policy debates occurring throughout the American political landscape. Finally, we will examine the effects that 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:
3. 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 the 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. Understand 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: Arrive on time to class and turn off all cell phones, and any other electronic devices that make noise or are generally rude to use during a class, and be ready to actively discuss the readings and topics for the class. Quality participation also includes thorough note taking, active listening, 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 links, your course syllabus, and announcements for the course. The course website is: 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 around 60 pages per week. However, the week readings are not evenly distributed. Please plan ahead and take advantage of lighter reading weeks by reading ahead on upcoming topics.

**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, and thoughtful questioning. 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. This is worth 5% of your grade. This will help me get to know more about you and to find out how to best direct the course.

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. 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 semester 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. 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://psc321spring2015.blogspot.com/

3. **Media News Presentation – 10%:** 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, 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 new story by asking two probing questions and framing the event within our course content when appropriate. Feel free to bring in any visuals that might aid in your presentation including news clips. Each presentation will last approximately 6 minutes including 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 five multiple choice or short answer questions based on the reading(s) for that class. You will be able to drop the worst score (or a missed quiz) and the remaining three 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.

5. **Research Project – 20%:** You will have a research project with multiple stages, including a final project due between the midterm and final. More details will be discussed in the upcoming weeks. Each part of the research project will be turned in using the D2L dropbox.

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**

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<th>Grade</th>
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**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 #370, and/or
- The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-1677, Student Center #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. Also, you can get credit for up to 10 blog entries (2 beyond the required 8).
4. You are encouraged to make use of the writing center to work on your writing. They are located at 802 W. Belden, 250 McGaw Hall. The Writing Center is open Mon. – Thurs. 10 AM to 5 PM. Fri. 10 AM to 3 PM. Phone: (773) 325-4272
COURSE OUTLINE, SCHEDULE, READING ASSIGNMENTS (Subject to change)

3/31 Introduction

Part I: The Media – What It Was, What It Is, and Where It’s Going

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<tr>
<th>4/2</th>
<th>The Historical Evolution of Mass Media in the United States (all readings also available on course website)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media Power in Politics: Ch. 1 by Bruce Bimber, pgs. 7 – 17</td>
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<td>Media Power in Politics: Ch. 4 by Michael Gurevitch, Stephen Coleman, and Jay G. Blumer, pgs. 45 – 53</td>
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<td>Course Website: “Introduction: The Ideal of Objectivity,” in Discovering the News: A Social History of</td>
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<td>American Newspapers by Michael Schudson, pgs. 3 – 11</td>
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<td>Course Website: “On the Connection Between Associations and Newspapers,” from Democracy in America</td>
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<td>(1834), by Alexis de Tocqueville. <a href="http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch2_06.htm">http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch2_06.htm</a></td>
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4/7 NO CLASS MEETING

4/9 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 – 25. |
| 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 |

4/14 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. 29 – 49. |
| Course Website: “Amid Criticism, Support for Media’s Watchdog Role Stands Out” from the Pew Research’s Center for the People and the Press |

4/16 Media and Journalism Today, and Hopefully Tomorrow

| 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. |

4/21 News Making and News Reporting

| Course Website: “The State of the News Media 2014: Overview and Key Indicators in Media and News” from the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism |
| Recommended Reading: |

4/23 Media as a Policy Maker

| Mass Media and American Politics by Doris Graber and Johanna Dunaway: Ch. 6: Media as Policy Makers, pgs. 142 – 168. |

Part II: Politics, Media, and Elections

| 4/28 | The Regulation of Media: What it Means for Politics, and for the Public |
4/30 The Media vs. Political Institutions: News From the President and Congress /Mid-Term Exam Review
Course Website: “Wolfsfeld Ch. 1: Political Power and Power over the Media,” by Gadi Wolfsfeld, pgs. 9 - 21.
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 20 by David Domke, Erica Sgrahm, Kevin Coe, Sue Lockett John and Ted Coopman, pgs. 251 – 263
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 21 by Patrick J. Sellers, pgs. 267 – 273

5/5 MID-TERM EXAM

5/7 The Media and Elections
Mass Media and American Politics by Doris Graber and Johanna Dunaway: Ch. 11: Elections in the Internet Age, pgs. 309 – 337
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 14 by Darrell M. West, pgs. 185 – 192
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 18 by Larry J. Sabato, pgs. 225 – 234

5/12 The Media and Elections (continued)
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 15 by Thomas E. Patrrison, pgs. 193 – 200
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 16 by Rachel Gibson, pgs. 203 – 213
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 17 by Niccole Wallace and Anita Dunn, pgs. 217 – 224

Part III: Mass Media and the Public

5/14 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

5/19 The Media and the Public: Political Voices from Outside of Government (RESEARCH PROJECT DUE)
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 22 by Doug McAdam, pgs. 275 – 282

5/21 How the Media Shapes Public Opinion (This is 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.
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 7, pgs. 85 – 98
Recommended Reading:
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

5/26 The Internet and Politics Today and Tomorrow
Media Power in Politics: Ch. 36 by Helen Z. Margetts, pgs. 431 – 441

5/28 How the Public Shapes the Media in the Internet Era
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

6/2 The Future of Media and Politics/Final Exam Review

6/9 FINAL EXAM 8:45 – 11:00