

Wright State University

Instructor: Lee Hannah
Location: 124 Allyn Hall
Office: 317 Millett Hall
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:00-12:00

Dates: January 13, 2020 - April 27, 2020
Class Meeting Time: Mondays 4:40 - 7:20 PM
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course investigates the interaction among the media, politicians, and citizens. The political media have been heavily scrutinized by both sides of the political aisle. While we will certainly engage with and entertain some of these ideas and critiques, it is important to remember that this is an academic course, not a venue for personal soapboxes, punditry, or partisan debates. The main questions that we will address include:
Integrate questions into description.

- 1) What is the media's place in American politics?
- 2) How are the media organized, and what rules and norms govern its coverage of politics?
- 3) Who and what makes the news?
- 4) How do elected leaders and candidates try to use the media to achieve their goals?
- 5) How do citizens respond to the media's coverage of politics and politicians' use of media?
- 6) What does the future hold for the media in a changing information landscape?

Learning Goals and Objectives

The course is organized around several motivating questions. By the conclusion of the course you will be able to answer the following:

1. What does the Constitution mean and why do we have multiple layers of government?
2. How do decisions made by the Founders affect the current state of politics?
3. How does Washington operate?
4. How are citizen preferences represented by different government actors and agencies?
5. How do citizens think about and influence politics?
6. How do outside organizations, such as interest groups and the media influence politics?

EXPECTATIONS:

Attendance: Your attendance in class is always expected. See [Wright State's Add/Drop Policy](#) and [Wright State's Excused Absence Policy](#). This is especially important for a class that only meets once a week.

Preparation and Participation: I expect you to read the assigned material before class and be able to discuss what you read in class.

Respectful Discussion: We are living in the midst of a very polarizing political era. We will be discussing controversial current events in this course. There will inevitably be divergent opinions, some of them very strong, amongst the class. It is important that you be respectful of your peers and their opinions, lived experiences, and beliefs.

Do Not Suffer in Silence: Please do not suffer in silence throughout the course if you are struggling. Instead, let me know - as soon as possible - what things are not making sense and we can work it out. If you are having a problem of any kind in the course, please talk to me about it as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty: All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Please consult the [Code of Student Conduct](#) for academic integrity.

Be Flexible: While the syllabus represents an agreement between us, I reserve the right to revise and modify it throughout the course if it is necessary to achieve our goals. Situations beyond either of our control can also emerge that require changes to the course. I will notify you of any changes made throughout the course.

Integrated Writing Course: PLS 4300 is designated an "Integrated Writing" (IW) course, designed to meet WSU guidelines for developing effective writing skills. Students will be expected to produce writing that:

- Demonstrates their understanding of course content,
- Is appropriate for the audience and purpose of a particular writing task,
- Demonstrates the degree of mastery of disciplinary writing conventions appropriate to the course (including documentation conventions), and
- Shows competency in standard edited American English.

Effective writing counts toward the final course grade. Students will meet IW requirements in a number of ways. These include reading question exercises, evaluating the news media assignment, and a final exam with short answer and essay components.

Make-Up Grades: These absences may include missing class for a University-sanctioned activity (with proper documentation), illness, religious observance, or family emergency. In case of an emergency, please contact me and we can work together on keeping you on track in the class.

Late Work Policy: Assignments turned in late will be penalized 5% per day.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Reading Questions (35% of final grade) We will be reading several peer-review articles during the term. Since many of these are complex, I have included reading questions to direct you to the sections of the article that are most important for comprehension. These are to be completed and submitted on Dropbox prior to the start of the class of the assigned reading.

Reporter Questions (5% of final grade) We will have three journalists visiting our classes to share about their experience and answer questions. As a way to direct the conversation, you will submit 5 questions for the reporter to Dropbox.

In class activities (10% of final grade) Two assignments will be given during classes on September 7 and November 30.¹

¹Only those with excused absences will be able to make up the work.

Evaluating the News Media Assignment (20% of final grade) The first unit examines the behavior and performance of the press. You will be asked to critique several news sources using course concepts. Details for the assignment will be posted on Pilot.

Final Exam (20% of final grade) The final exam will be given during exam week and will cover the final unit of course material.

Participation and Attendance (10% of final grade) You are expected to come to class and to actively participate in class discussion and activities. Laptops and tablets are permitted for note taking. Students will be asked to put away technology if they are distracted by the technology.

Mental Health Resources

Wright State University is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. We acknowledge that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety and stress, substance abuse problems, and depression, directly impacts students' academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact the [Counseling and Wellness Services](#) at Wright State located in Student Union 053.

DISABILITY:

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office of Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated. It is your responsibility to notify me during the first week of the semester if such accommodations are needed. If you have questions about this, contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) at 937-775-5680 or disability_services@wright.edu.

COURSE SCHEDULE:²

Unit I: Behavior and Performance of the Press

January 13: Course Introduction

Readings

- Graber Text Ch. 1³
- Burns, Eric. (2006). "Introduction: Inappropriate Behavior." in *Infamous Scribblers: The Founding Fathers and the Rowdy Beginnings of American Journalism*, New York: Public Affairs.
- Murphy, Cullen. (2020). "Before Zuckerberg, Gutenberg." *The Atlantic*.

January 20: No Class - MLK Day HolidayJanuary 27: The Press and the Democratic Process

Readings

- Iyengar, Shanto. (2016). "The Press and the Democratic Process: The American System in a Comparative Perspective." Ch. 2 in *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: W.M. Norton and Company.
- Patterson, Thomas E. (1997). "The News Media: An Effective Political Actor?" *Political Communication*, 14(4): 445-455.

Assignments

- Documentary - *PAGE ONE: Inside the New York Times*
- In-Class Assignment: Documentary Questions

February 3: The Media Marketplace: Organizational Processes and Routines, Audiences and Market Pressures

Readings:

- Iyengar, Shanto. (2016). "The Press and the Democratic Process: The American System in a Comparative Perspective." Ch. 2 in *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*. 3rd ed. New York, NY: W.M. Norton and Company.
- Readings: Gentzkow, Matthew and Jesse M. Shapiro. 2010. "What Drives Media Slant? Evidence from U.S. Daily Newspapers." *Econometrica*, 78(1): 35-71.
- Hemmer, Nicole. (2014 January 17). "The Conservative War on Liberal Media Bias Has a Long History." *The Atlantic*.

²Students are responsible for knowing both university and course schedules.

The academic calendar is available at: <https://www.wright.edu/registrar/academic-calendar>.

³Readings are to be completed before the corresponding class.

Assignments

- Reading Questions #1
- Questions for Anthony Shoemaker⁴

February 10: Local Media and Representation

Reading: Dixon, Travis L. 2017. "Good Guys Are Still Always in White? Positive Change and Continued Misrepresentation of Race and Crime on Local Television News." *Communication Research*, 44(6): 775-792.

Suggested Reading: Yanich, Danilo. 2012. "Local TV News, Content, and the Bottom Line." *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 35(3): 327-342

Assignment: Reading Questions # 2

Assignment: Questions for Nathan Edwards⁵

February 17 (T): Reporters, Official Sources, Adversarial Journalism, and Indexing the News

Local television reporting with guest Nathan Edwards - Anchor and reporter at WGRT Fox 45/ABC 22.

Reading: Text Ch. 4

Reading: From the editors. (2004, May 26). "The Times and Iraq." *The New York Times*, p. A10.

February 24 (T): The Press and National Security

Readings: Adams, Russell and Jessica E. Vascellaro. (2010 November 29). "To Publish Leaks or Not to Publish?" *Wall Street Journal*.⁶

Ellison, Sarah. (2011 February). "The Man Who Spilled the Secrets." *Vanity Fair*.

Frum, David. (2017 August 3). "Why Leaking Transcripts of Trump's Calls is So Dangerous." *The Atlantic*.

March 2: Spring Break

Unit II: Shaping the News: Candidates, Advocacy Groups, and Elected Officials

March 9: New Media and Campaigns Challenges of New Media: Authoritative Sources and Fake News

Reading: Text Ch. 5

Evaluating the News Assignment due.⁷

Reading: Allcott, Hunt and Matthew Gentzkow. 2017. "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2): 211-236.

Suggested Reading: Lawrence, Regina C. and Amber E. Boydston. 2017. "Celebrities as Actors and Entertainment as Political Media." In P. Van Aelst and S. Walgrave (Eds.), *How Political Actors Use the Media* (Chapter 3). New York: Palgrave.

Assignment: Reading Questions #3

⁴Submit two questions to Anthony to the message board before class on February 3. [Author Profile](#)

⁵Submit two questions questions for Nathan to the message board before class on February 10. [Author Profile](#)

⁶PDF of this article is posted on Pilot.

⁷Submit to dropbox before class.

March 16: Campaigning Through the Media

Reading: Text Ch. 6

Draper, Robert. (2016 September 29). "[How Donald Trump Set Off a Civil War Within the Right-Wing Media.](#)" *New York Times Magazine*. DUPLICATE WITH WEEK 12

Reading: Shaw, Daron. 2006. "The Truth About Electoral College Strategies." Ch. 3 in *The Race to 270: The Electoral College and the Campaign Strategies of 2000 and 2004* (pp. 41-60). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Suggested Reading: Herrnson, Paul S., J. Celeste Lay, and Atiya Kai Stokes. 2003. "[Women Running as Women: Candidate Gender, Campaign Issues, and Voter-Targeting Strategies.](#)" *The Journal of Politics* 65(1): 244-255.

Assignment: Reading Questions #4

March 23 (T): Governing through the Media

Reading: Text Ch. 7

Reading: Cook, Timothy E. 2005. "The Uses of News: Theory and (Presidential) Practice." Ch. 6 in *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution, 2nd Edition* (pp. 117-140). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Suggested Reading: Andrews, Kenneth T. and Neal Caren. 2010. "[Making the News: Movement Organizations, Media Attention, and the Public Agenda.](#)" *American Sociological Review*, 75(6): 841-866

Assignment: Reading Questions #5

Assignment: Questions for Jim Hannah⁸

March 30: Media and Public Opinion

The national and international news beat with Jim Hannah, Assistant Director of Public Relations, Communications, and Marketing for Wright State University and former reporter for the *Rome American Daily*, *Indianapolis Star*, and Associated Press.

Unit III: Media Effects

Reading: Text Ch. 8

April 6: Partisan Media and Polarization

Readings: Bakshy, Eytan, Solomon Messing and Lada A. Adamic. 2015. "[Exposure to Ideologically Diverse News and Opinion on Facebook.](#)" *Science*, 248(6239), 1130-1132.

Levendusky, Matthew. 2017. "[Partisan Media and Polarization: Challenges for Future Work.](#)" *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, London, UK: Oxford University Press.

Assignment: Reading Questions #6

April 13: Partisan Media and Online Political Deliberation

Readings: Draper, Robert. (2016 September 29). "[How Donald Trump Set Off a Civil War Within the Right-Wing Media.](#)" *The New York Times Magazine*. DUPLICATE

⁸Submit 5 questions for the journalist to Dropbox before class. [Author profile](#)

Weaver, David A. and Joshua M. Scacco. 2013. "[Revisiting the Protest Paradigm: The Tea Party as Filtered Through Prime-Time Cable News.](#)" *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 18(1): 61-84

Suggested Reading: DellaVigna, Stefano and Ethan Kaplan. 2007. "[The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting.](#)" *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122(3): 1187-1234.

Reading: Barberá, Pablo, John T. Jost, Jonathan Nagler, Joshua A. Tucker, and Richard Bonneau. 2015. "[Tweeting from Left to Right: Is Online Political Communication More Than An Echo Chamber?](#)" *Psychological Science*, 26(10): 1531-1542.

Assignment: Reading Questions #7

April 20 (T): Politics and Entertainment Media

Readings: Pautz, Michelle C. 2015. "[Argo and Zero Dark Thirty: Film, Government, and Audiences.](#)" *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 48(1): 120-128.

Morrison, Oliver. "[Waiting for the Conservative Jon Stewart.](#)" (2015 February 14), *The Atlantic*.

November 28 (T): Infotainment

Readings: Flanagan, Caitlin. "[How Late-Night Comedy Fueled the Rise of Trump.](#)" (2017 May), *The Atlantic*.

Goldstein, Aaron. "[Johnny Carson - The King of Late Night, and of Good Manners.](#)" (2017 May 22), *National Review*.

Curtis, Bryan. "[Sportswriting Has Become a Liberal Profession - Here's How It Happened.](#)" (2017 February 16). *The Ringer*.

November 30 (Th): Presidential Popularity: Evaluating President Trump

Reading: Text Ch. 10

Assignment: President Trump's Ratings Activity

[Gallup Approval](#)

[FiveThirtyEight Ratings](#)

Week 15

December 5 (T): Evaluating Media Politics

Reading: Text Ch. 11

December 7 (Th): Course Wrap-Up

April 27 (Th): Final Exam 5:45 - 7:45 PM⁹

⁹Final Exam will only cover Unit III.