

# PSC 319

## Media and American Politics First Summer Session

### 1 Class Information

- ⇒ **Instructor:** Nicholas P. Nicoletti
- ⇒ **Office:** 516 Park Hall
- ⇒ **Phone Number:** (716) 645-8451 (Currently Inactive)
- ⇒ **Email:** npn@buffalo.edu
- ⇒ **Class Time:** Monday and Wednesday, 6:30 pm - 9:40 pm
- ⇒ **Room:** 210 Norton Hall
- ⇒ **Office Hours:** Wednesday 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

### 2 Course Description

The news media has a vital role in the democratic process. American citizens rely on various forms of media to acquire information about politics. In fact, the news media is often assumed to be the principal way individuals obtain political information. Moreover, the media provides a forum for political elites to send messages to the public; allows parties to debate qualifications for office; provides information and perspectives on important issues of the day; and helps monitor the acts of public officials to deter violations of the public trust (Iyengar, 2011). Media is so important that scholars have analyzed the news media as a political institution or fourth branch of government.

The purpose of this course is to explore the role of print and electronic media in American Politics and their relationship to the public, politicians, and ultimately, public policy. In doing so, we will assess the media's impact on public opinion, government, policy making, election campaigning, and the prospects for democratic deliberation. The class will also focus on the American media marketplace and the role free-market economics plays in the way Americans get their news; this can be quite different from the publicly funded media model. We will also look at the effects of what are often called "new media"; this refers to internet-based media such as social networks, blogs, and websites. We will pay special attention to the issue of bias in the news media. There is still a legitimate debate about whether bias exists and, if it does exist, what impact it has on public opinion and the policy process. Finally, we will not only cover the effects media has on politics and policy making, but also how political actors use the media to their advantage.

In order to study media's various roles in American politics, the course will also focus on theory and empirical methodology. Many of the articles that have been assigned use advanced methodology for both theory building and hypothesis testing. The course will introduce students to the basic elements of these methods within political science

research writ large. By the end of the course students will have a basic understanding of formal modeling (a tool for building deductive theories) and regression analysis (a tool for testing hypotheses derived from theory); we will also apply this methodology to the study of media and American politics.

### 3 Course Expectations

First, this is a **summer night class** which runs from 6:30 pm to 9:40 pm; over 3 full hours. YOU choose to enroll in a night class about politics. Naturally, we will have to cover as much material as the same course which is held two or three times a week during a normal 15 week semester. This means that some weeks will require 60 plus pages of reading. I expect that *ALL* students will come to class each week having read the material assigned for that day. **Readings are due on the day they are listed in the syllabus AND you are required to bring the readings with you to class that day!**

Moreover, the readings are theoretically and analytically rigorous. Simply put, many of them are difficult and will require students to do more than skim through the pages. Students are expected to go beyond the memorization of core concepts and vocabulary words; you will be expected to apply these concepts throughout the class. You will also be expected to apply mathematical tools and concepts to real world data.

While I do not take attendance, I expect that students participate in class. Participation is worth 10% of your grade and *simple attendance is not good enough*. You are required to *answer* and/or *ask* questions during this class. If you are someone that does not like to talk during class, you may want to reconsider your enrollment. **If you do not participate you will not be able to earn a major portion of your grade.**

Each class will include one ten minute break occurring approximately halfway through the class (8:10 pm). Some students take this break as an opportunity to leave for the night. I fully understand that there will be times when students must leave before the class is over. If you have to leave before the class is over simply tell me before the start of class. Refrain from using the break as an unexcused time to go home for the night. This is *a serious personal vexation*. Although I do not take attendance, I often send around a sign-in sheet after the break and give *participation credit* (not *extra credit*) for those still in their seats. Simply put, do not leave during the break. Late arrivals are also annoying and disturb the class. However, **I would rather a student arrive late than not come to class at all**. Late students will be taking a chance. Pop Quizzes are given at the very beginning of class. If you are too late to take the quiz you automatically lose the quiz points for that day, no exceptions. Thus, there are consequences for being late and for leaving early. Please give the class and I the courtesy of refraining from these actions.

Unexcused absences on exam day will result in a forfeiture of all points for that exam. Make-ups can be scheduled only for students who pre-excuse their absences (that means before the exam, **not after**). An absence is only excused if supported by documentation

either from University personnel or your physician. **There are absolutely no make-ups for pop quizzes; if you miss class on a day that I give a quiz, you will lose the quiz points for that day — NO EXCEPTIONS.**

The Final Group Project is due at the beginning of class on Monday June 25, 2012. A single **hard copy** of the Final Group Project must be submitted on the day it is due at the beginning of class (i.e. 6:30 pm). Moreover, groups are required to submit a digital copy to the SafeAssign drop-box located under the *Assignments Tab* on UB Learns by 6:30 pm on June 25, 2012 (see below for more details on similarity detection software). *Once the SafeAssign drop-box closes, it will not be reopened.* Groups will also be able to view their SafeAssign report, so there will be no surprises when it comes to whether a group correctly cited a source or not. **Late papers will not be accepted.** More information on the Final Group Project can be found on pages 8-11 of the syllabus.

I expect that the following classroom norms will be followed in my class. Please refrain from listening to mp3 players/all music devices, texting, instant messaging, Facebooking, Tweeting, or typing assignments for other courses during this class. Cell Phones should remain off at the start of class. Laptop computers are a privilege and may be used for note taking or reading digital copies of the textbook; this privilege may be revoked at my discretion at any time. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students are expected to be respectful of their peers and various points of view. Discussion is encouraged but rude responses will not be tolerated. Finally, please refrain from holding private conversations with your peers during class; this behavior is distracting to other students and the overall classroom environment. If I become aware that you are violating any of these norms, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

Multiple students often have the same question regarding course material or administrative issues. All relevant information about the course should be contained in this syllabus. Thus, students should always consult the syllabus first when they have a general / administrative question. In the event that the answer to your question is not in the syllabus, I have setup a Discussion Forum, under the "Discussion Board" tab in UB Learns, where students can anonymously post a question about administrative issues or course material. Utilizing this mechanism allows all students to gain access to the answers to frequently asked questions. Hence, always check the discussion forum for the answer to your question (after you have consulted the syllabus). If the answer to your question is not in the discussion forum, create a new post and I will answer your question. Of course, students are free to email me or stop by my office hours with any questions; I understand that some questions / issues must be resolved outside of the discussion forum.

I expect a lot from students in my class, so you ought to expect something from me. You can expect me to come to class prepared, enthusiastic, and open to questions at any time. You can expect me to always be available during my office hours and to answer emails within a 24 hour window. *If you are struggling with the material do not hesitate to see me!* I take my teaching responsibility seriously and I strive to be the best possible professor I can be. I will often ask for your feedback during the course and I take your

input seriously.

## 4 Grading

- \* “Surprise” Quizzes on the Readings Due that Day: 15%
- \* Midterm Exam: 25%
- \* Final Exam: 25%
- \* Final Group Project: 25%
- \* Participation: 10%

Each test will consist of two parts: (1) Multiple Choice and (2) Short Essay. The exams are not cumulative. The quizzes are in the “pop” form, so it is in your interest to read the material prior to coming to class. There will be approximately 8-10 quizzes (out of a possible of 12 classes). See below for more information on the Group Project and Participation.

## 5 Grading Distribution

- ✓ A = 94 and Above
- ✓ A- = 90 - 93
- ✓ B+ = 87 - 89
- ✓ B = 84 - 86
- ✓ B- = 80 - 83
- ✓ C+ = 76 - 79
- ✓ C = 70 - 75
- ✓ D = 60 - 69
- ✓ F = 0 - 59

## 6 Required Texts

- ◇ Iyengar, Shanto (2011). *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*. Norton. ISBN-13: 978-0-393-93557-8.
- ◇ The remaining readings are a mixture of scholarly articles and book chapters which will be posted on UB Learns or given as handouts. A “†” indicates that the reading is posted on UB Learns. A “∨” indicates that the reading is a class handout. The References section of this syllabus provides a list of readings for this class in the American Political Science Association (APSA) citation style.

## 7 Academic Honesty

Cheating and plagiarism (using someone else's work or ideas without proper citation) will not be tolerated. The UB policy on plagiarism is available at: <http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/asl/guides/plagiarism.html>. Cheating and/or plagiarism is a serious offense and can have severe consequences. Cell phones, PDAs, tablets, laptops, digital cameras or electronic devices of any kind (calculators can be utilized if necessary) are banned from all tests and quizzes. Students using electronic devices during tests and quizzes will fail the assignment. If you are taking a quiz or test and found using an electronic device, I will be forced to take your assignment away and you will receive a zero. Of course there are other ways to cheat and all of them will result in the same consequence, complete failure of the assignment.

## 8 Similarity Detection Software

To prevent and detect plagiarism, I will require students to use similarity detection software (e.g. SafeAssign) in this course. Textual similarity software compares submitted student text to a database of millions of previously published documents, including those on the public internet, a proprietary collection of published articles, as well as every student paper previously submitted to the detection software. When similarities between student text and an existing document are found, the software identifies those similarities for the instructor and/or student to review. Similarity alone is not evidence of academic misconduct, as such material may be correctly cited. This software may be used as an educational tool to assist students in learning how to properly cite resources, to decrease instances of academic misconduct, and/or to assist in the identification of acts of academic misconduct. The SafeAssign drop-box is located under the *Assignments Tab* on UB Learns. Once an assignment is submitted to SafeAssign students will be able to view the same report the professor is given after it is generated (which takes about 20 minutes).

## 9 Special Needs

Any student who requires accommodations to complete the requirements and expectations of this course because of a disability is invited to make his or her needs known to the instructor and to the Disabilities Services Office, 25 Capen. Students with special needs should bring their requirements to my attention in the first week of classes. I will make every effort to assist students with special needs. Students dealing with stress-related problems should visit the Counseling Center, 120 Richmond Quad.

## 10 Participation

Attendance is an important part of the college learning experience. I expect students to come to class prepared (having done the readings and assignments) and ready to participate in the form of answering and asking questions. While I will not take formal

attendance, I will be keeping track of average participation rates. Participation is worth approximately 10% of your grade. I take this part of the class very seriously.

## 11 Course Schedule

### 12 Week 1

#### 12.1 Monday May 21, 2012:

##### 12.1.1 ⇒ Course Introduction and Administrative Review

- ★ Administrative review and Course Introduction.
- ★ Iyengar, Chapter 1: Introduction, Image is Everything, pp. 1 — 17.

#### 12.2 Wednesday May 23, 2012:

##### 12.2.1 ⇒ The Media and the American System

- ★ Iyengar, Chapter 2: The Press and the Democratic Process, The American System in Comparative Perspective, pp. 18 — 49.
- ★ Bennet, Chapter 1: The News About Democracy, pp. 1 — 34. ∇
- ★ Introduction to theory and methods in political science (lecture no reading).

### 13 Week 2

#### 13.1 Monday May 28, 2012:

##### 13.1.1 ⇒ Memorial Day - NO CLASS

- ★ NO CLASS, MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY OBSERVED.

#### 13.2 Wednesday May 30, 2012:

##### 13.2.1 ⇒ The Market, Reporters, and “Indexing”

- ★ Iyengar, Chapter 3: The Media Marketplace, Where American Get Their News, pp. 50 — 91.
- ★ Iyengar, Chapter 4: Reporters, Official Sources, and the Decline of Adversarial Journalism, pp. 92 — 112.
- ★ Patterson, Thomas E., and Wolfgang Donsbach. (1996) “News Decisions: Journalists as Partisan Actors.” *Political Communication*. Vol. 13. pp. 455 — 468. †

## 14 Week 3

### 14.1 Monday June 4, 2012:

#### 14.1.1 ⇒ New Media and Media and the Campaign Environment

- \* Iyengar, Chapter 5: New Media, New Forms of Campaigning, pp. 113 — 149.
- \* Iyengar, Chapter 6: Campaigning Through the Media, pp. 149 — 194.
- \* Lawrence, Eric, John Sides, and Henry Farrell. (2010). “Self-Segregation or De-liberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics.” *Perspectives of Politics*. Vol. 8, pp. 141-158. †

### 14.2 Wednesday June 6, 2012:

#### 14.2.1 ⇒ Going Public and The Media as a Political Institution

- \* Iyengar, Chapter 7: Going Public, Governing Through the Media, pp. 195— 228.
- \* Cook, Chapter 4: The Institutional News Media, pp. 61 — 84. ∇
- \* Cook, Chapter 5: The Political News Media, pp. 85 — 115. ∇
- \* **\*Note:** Both Cook Chapters are in the same handout.
- \* **FOUR ANNOTATED CITATIONS DUE.**

## 15 Week 4

### 15.1 Monday June 11, 2012:

#### 15.1.1 ⇒ MIDTERM EXAM

- \* MIDTERM EXAM.

### 15.2 Wednesday June 13, 2012:

#### 15.2.1 ⇒ Public Opinion and the Media

- \* Iyengar, Chapter 8: News and Public Opinion, pp. 229 — 271.
- \* Bennet, Chapter 4: Citizens and the News, Public Opinion and Information Process-ing, pp. 76 — 110. ∇
- \* Turner, Joel. (2007). “The Messenger Overwhelming the Message: Ideological Cues and Perceptions of Bias in Television News” *Political Behavior*. Vol. 29(4). pp. 441 — 464. †

## 16 Week 5

### 16.1 Monday June 18, 2012:

#### 16.1.1 ⇒ Political Campaigns and the Media / Media Bias Measured

- \* Iyengar, Chapter 9: Campaigns That Matter, pp. 272 — 305.
- \* Iyengar, Chapter 10: The Consequences of Going Public, pp. 306 — 333.
- \* Groseclose, Tim, and Jeffrey Milyo. (2005). "A Measure of Media Bias" *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Vol. 120(4). pp. 1191 — 1237. †

### 16.2 Wednesday June 20, 2012:

#### 16.2.1 ⇒ Media and Foreign Policy

- \* Graber, Chapter 11: Foreign Affairs Coverage, pp. 286 — 315. ∇
- \* Baum, Matthew A., and Tim Groeling. (2009). "Shot By the Messenger: Partisan Cues and Public Opinion Regarding National Security and War" *Political Behavior*. Vol. 31. pp. 157 — 186. †
- \* Nicoletti, Nicholas P. (2012). "Belief Formation During Wartime Elections: Accurate vs. Biased Signals." *Prepared for the 2012 Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference*. pp. 1 — 32. †

## 17 Week 6

### 17.1 Monday June 25, 2012:

#### 17.1.1 ⇒ GROUP PRESENTATIONS

- \* PEER EVALUATION FORMS DUE.
- \* GROUP PRESENTATION DAY (Approximately 15-20 minute groups presentations, see below for more information).

### 17.2 Monday June 27, 2012:

#### 17.2.1 ⇒ FINAL EXAM

- ‡ FINAL EXAM.

## 18 Literature Review Group Project

### 18.1 General Information:

Located on UB Learns, under the Course Documents Tab, is a list of topics which have been developed within the subfield of Mass Media and American Politics. Teams of 3-



4 students (depending on how many students enroll in the class) will research several questions regarding the topic they are assigned. Each group will be responsible for developing a 15-20 minute PowerPoint (or some other type, such as Prezi, Open Office's Impress, Keynote, etc.) digital slide show which will be presented to the class on **June 25, 2012**. Each team will also be responsible for handing in a 6-8 page *outline* of their presentation, which will be due at the beginning of class on June 25, 2012. **The outline should be a detailed, thorough, and fully cited version of the presentation.** The **Final Presentation Rubric** can be found under the Course Documents tab in UB Learns. This document explains exactly what I will be looking for in the outline/presentation.

Students will also complete an Individual/Peer assessment form for themselves and every other member of their group. The assessment form can be found under the Course Documents section in UB Learns. *Each student* is to submit a form at the beginning of class on June 25, 2012. These forms will be taken seriously by the instructor when grading each student's contribution to the group project. "Social Loafing", "Free Riding", or whatever you wish to call the Collective Action problem that plagues group projects, is unacceptable and each student is required to pull their weight in the group. If necessary (i.e. based on the peer evaluation forms) I will grade individuals differently from the rest of the group; this is unlikely to occur unless there is overwhelming evidence that a group member failed to do a proper amount of work. The evaluation forms are completely anonymous and will not be seen by the other members of each group.

## **18.2 Presentation Research Questions**

### **18.3 (1) Description of the Theoretical Research on the Topic**

In this section you should give a description of the research questions that have been developed in your topic area. For example, if you are studying bias in the media a typical research question is whether biased news generates biased citizens? The group should then proceed to give a detailed description of the theories which have been developed within the topic you have been assigned. You should also try to find out which scholar(s) was the first (or if not the first an early contributor) to develop research in your assigned topic area. *Most importantly*, what do the theories for your topic argue? What are they trying to explain (dependent variable)? What are the causal processes they identify (independent variables)? This is one of the most important parts of the project and the rest of the presentation will build on this section.

### **18.4 (2) Theory Application**

In this section you need to research how the theories for your topic have been applied to Political Science. Have any of the theories been applied or extended into multiple topics? *Most importantly*, in this section you will integrate the application of the theories you researched with material we learned throughout the semester. Link your research to class concepts or build on topics we have already covered.

### 18.5 (3) Empirical Evidence

How have your theories been tested? What evidence have these tests revealed? This section should give a detailed discussion of the empirical research used to evaluate hypotheses derived from the theories in part one. The section can discuss the ways in which the theory was tested (experiments, multiple regression, survey methods, etc.), but should focus on the *results* the tests have revealed. What are the major findings from the political science research regarding your topic? Has the literature reached some sort of consensus or are there still debates regarding competing theories?

### 18.6 (4) Theory Improvement

How can the theories within your topic be improved? Discuss some interesting avenues of research that may have been overlooked or a new area of research for your topic. This section should not be overlooked; the group will need to critically think about what they have researched and try to suggest feasible improvements. The group may even want to develop their own unique theory which can help to explain some phenomena within the topic area.

### 18.7 Due Date(s)

A list of 4 annotated sources for the team presentation should be submitted on **June 6, 2012**; this should be 2-3 pages and list 4 potential sources that you have gathered for your outline/presentation. Each citation should be accompanied by an *annotation* about a paragraph long. The annotation should give a complete description of the article's major points. This assignment is intended to get each group to seriously begin the research process early in the semester. **It will be worth 2 out of 25 points (8%) of the Final Presentation grade.**

A hard copy of your outline is due at the beginning of class (6:30 pm) on Wednesday June 25<sup>th</sup>. Late outlines will *not* be accepted. A digital copy of the outline **MUST** be submitted to the SafeAssign drop-box under the Assignments Tab in UB Learns by 6:30 pm on Monday June 25<sup>th</sup>. The outline must be in a format that SafeAssign can read. I suggest using Microsoft Word to prepare the outline. Nevertheless, most programs can save in what is called rich text format (RTF) which is accepted by SafeAssign. ***Failure to submit both copies will result in failure for the entire group.***

### 18.8 Citations

All direct quotes, paraphrased text, and ideas must be cited in your paper. As a general rule, if you got an idea from somewhere, you should cite the source. I have given you several examples of the American Political Science Association Citation Style in this syllabus. The References section gives examples of how to cite books and journal articles. You may also use footnotes or endnotes, but your paper must follow a professional citation style (APSA, APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). Instructions on how to use these

styles can be found at the University Library web-site at: [http://library.buffalo.edu/asl/tutorials/citing\\_stylemanual.html](http://library.buffalo.edu/asl/tutorials/citing_stylemanual.html) or here at <http://dept.lamar.edu/polisci/DRURY/drury.html>.

Your outline should cite at least **10** different sources. **At least 8 sources must be from peer-reviewed academic journals or scholarly books.** Other sources can include relevant newspaper articles and popular non-fiction books; although it is highly recommended that the group stick with scholarly journal articles. **Wikipedia is not an OK citation, DO NOT CITE Wiki in you bibliography!** Moreover, do not use information from *Wikipedia* and fail to cite it; it will become apparent that you used this source when I look at your SafeAssign report. Citing a Wiki will result in loss of points on this assignment. *Wikipedia* is an OK place to look for ideas, but you should follow up with original sources.

## 18.9 Outline Format

All outlines must follow these strict formatting guidelines. Your grade will be impacted if you do not follow these standards.

- ✓ No more than 8 double spaced pages of text (not including your endnotes or reference sheet).
- ✓ Times New Roman, 12 Point Font.
- ✓ 1 inch margins top and bottom.
- ✓ 1 inch margins left and right.
- ✓ Fully paginated.
- ✓ Use a professional citation style consistently all the way through the assignment.
- ✓ The outline should also be broken up into each section listed above, just like this syllabus is broken-up into sections.
- ✓ All outlines should be edited for appropriate spelling and grammar. Formatting, grammar, and spelling count toward your grade.

## References

Baum, Matthew A. and Tim J. Groeling. 2009. "Shot by the Messenger: Partisan Cues and Public Opinion Regarding National Security and War." *Political Behavior* 31:157–189.

Bennet, W. Lance. 2012. *News: The Politics of Illusion*. New York: Longman.

Graber, Doris A. 2009. *Mass Media and American Politics, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Groseclose, Tim and Jeffrey Milyo. 2005. "A Measure of Media Bias." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120(4):pp. 1191–1237.

- Iyengar, Shanto. 2011. *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Lawrence, Eric, John Sides and Henry Farrell. 2010. "Self-Segregation or Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 8:141–158.
- Nicoletti, Nicholas P. 2012. "Belief Formation During Wartime Elections: Accurate vs. Biased Signals." *Prepared for the 2012 Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Conference* pp. 1–32.
- Patterson, Thomas E. and Wolfgang Donsbach. 1996. "News Decisions: Journalists as Partisan Actors." *Political Communication* 13:455–468.
- Turner, Joel. 2007. "The Messenger Overwhelming the Message: Ideological Cues and Perceptions of Bias in Television News." *Political Behavior* 29(4):pp. 441–464.