

POLSCI 3BB3/CMST 3D03
POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: CANADA AND THE WORLD
WINTER 2020

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Lecture: Monday, Wednesday,
Thursday 1:30 PM – 2:20 PM.
Room: KTH B104

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Office Hours: Wednesday 3:30 PM –
4:30 PM or by appointment

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Course Description

This course will study the relationship between politics and the media through the reading of theoretical texts as well as case studies from democratic and non-democratic contexts. Among the modules we will examine in POL SCI 3BB3 are the impact of the traditional and new media on the quality of the electoral process, the significance of the freedom of the press in democracies, the notions of journalistic objectivity and the possibility of social, cultural, and political biases. We will also explore some recent controversies surrounding the subject of fake news and the role the state-administered media play in authoritarian societies.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Understand the role the media plays in liberal democracies in general and Canada in particular.

Required Materials and Texts

- All required readings will be made available through the course website on Avenue To Learn.

Class Format

The course includes three lectures per week.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Take-Home Test - 25%, due February 13, 2020
2. Writing Assignment - OP-ED, 1000 words max. - 25%, due March 16, 2020
3. Final Exam - 30%, date April 2020
4. Response papers - 15 %, due between weeks 3 and 11
5. Regular class attendance – 5 %

Course Evaluation – Details

Take-Home Test (25%), due on February 13, 2020

The take home test will be posted on Avenue to Learn by February 03, 2020. It will include short and long answer questions.

OP-ED Writing Assignment (25%), due on March 15, 2019

Students are required to write an OP-ED no longer than 1000 words. The assignment writing instructions will be posted on Avenue to Learn by February 1, 2020.

Final Exam (30%), April 2020

A final exam will be held during the regular exam period. The exam will include short and long answer questions. I will conduct an exam review in the last week of the term.

Short Reading Responses (5 x 3% = 15%), due in class between weeks 3 and 11.

Each one of these participation papers should be roughly 300 words long and should discuss one of the readings from the module we are covering in a given week. The reading response should discuss the critical points of the reading of your choice. That is, we are not looking for a general overview/summary of that reading. I would like you to briefly reflect on the critical discussion that takes place in that piece. Feel free to suggest further questions for reflection or to speculate on how a particular problem raised by the reading could be solved/tackled. You can hand in only one response paper per week. I will not accept any response papers over email. All of the response papers have to be handed in person during the class. You can use any citation style. Please make sure you clearly identify the article/book chapter you are responding to.

Regular Class Attendance (5%).

Students missing more than 1/3 of classes will receive 0 attendance marks.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Weeks 1 & 2 (January 6, 8, 9, 13, and 15)

Module 1. Public opinion formation & the mass media

Jacobs, Ronald N., and Eleanor R. Townsley. "Media and Opinion Formation." In *The Space of Opinion: Media Intellectuals and the Public Sphere*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011.

Price, Vincent. "[The Public and Public Opinion in Political Theories](#)." In *The SAGE Handbook of Public Opinion Research*, 11–24. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008.

McCombs, Maxwell E. *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*. Cambridge, UK : Malden, MA: Polity ; Blackwell Pub, 2004. (Chapter 1)

Weeks 2 & 3 (January 16, 20, 22, 23, and 27)

Module 2. Media and Democracy/ Elections

Baker, C. Edwin. "Democracy at the Crossroads: Why Ownership Matters." In *Media Concentration and Democracy: Why Ownership Matters*. Communication, Society, and Politics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Fox, Richard L., and Amy Gangl. "'News You Can't Use': Politics and Democracy in the New Media Environment." In *Manipulating Democracy: Democratic Theory, Political Psychology, and Mass Media*, edited by Wayne Le Cheminant and John M. Parrish. London ; New York: Routledge, 2011.

Marland, Alex. "Political Communication in Canada: Strategies and Tactics." In *Canadian Politics*, edited by James Bickerton and Alain Gagnon, Sixth edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.

Prior, Markus. *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*. Cambridge Studies in Public Opinion and Political Psychology. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. (Chapter 8)

Weeks 4 & 5 (January 29, 30; February 03, 05, 06)

Module 3. Media, Political Campaigns, and Persuasion

Hollihan, Thomas A. *Uncivil Wars: Political Campaigns in a Media Age*. 2nd ed. Boston: St. Martin's, 2009 (Chapters 5 & 6).

Kahn, Kim Fridkin, and Patrick J. Kenney. "[Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the Relationship between Negativity and Participation.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 4 (December 1999): 877–89..

Iyengar, Shanto, and Adam F. Simon. "[New Perspectives and Evidence on Political Communication and Campaign Effects.](#)" *Annual Review of Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2000): 149–69.

Sides, John, and Kalev Leetaru. "[Analysis | A Deep Dive into the News Media's Role in the Rise of Donald J. Trump.](#)" *The Monkey Cage, Washington Post* (blog). Accessed January 5, 2019.

Weeks 6 & 8 (February 10, 12, 13, and 24)

Module 4. Journalism, Fake News, and Truth

Bennett, W. Lance. "[An Introduction to Journalism Norms and Representations of Politics.](#)" *Political Communication* 13, no. 4 (October 1, 1996): 373–84.

Allcott, Hunt, and Matthew Gentzkow. "[Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election.](#)" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 2 (May 2017): 211–36.

Fallows, James. "[Learning to Love the \(Shallow, Divisive, Unreliable\) New Media.](#)" *The Atlantic*, February 24, 2011.

Uberti, David. "[The Real History of Fake News.](#)" *Columbia Journalism Review*, December 2016.

NOTE: Assignment # 1 - Take-Home Test - 25%, due February 13, 2020

Reading Week February 17 – 23, 2020

No Classes

Weeks 8 & 9 (February 26, 27; March 2, 4, and 5)

Module 5. Political and Cultural Bias?

Lawrence, Regina G. "Do the Media Give Women Candidates a Fair Shake?" In *New Directions in Media and Politics*, edited by Travis N. Ridout. New Directions in American Politics. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.

Nacos, Brigitte, and Oscar Torres-Reyna. "Framing Muslim-Americans Before and After 9/11." In *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government, and the Public*, edited by Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion R. Just. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Klar, Samara, Joshua Robison, and James Druckman. "Political Dynamics of Framing." In *New Directions in Media and Politics*, edited by Travis N. Ridout. New Directions in American Politics. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.

Nyhan, Brendan, et al. "[Does the US Media Have a Liberal Bias?: A Discussion of Tim Groseclose's Left Turn: How Liberal Media Bias Distorts the American Mind.](#)" *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 3 (September 2012): 767–85.

Weeks 10 & 11 (March 9, 11, 12, 16)

Module 6. New Media and Politics

Eshbaugh-Soha, Matthew. "Traditional Media, Social Media, and Different Presidential Campaign Messages." In *Controlling the Message: New Media in American Political Campaigns*, edited by Victoria A. Farrar-Myers and Justin S. Vaughn. New York: New York University Press, 2015.

Hart, Roderick P. "Politics in the Digital Age: A Scary Prospect?" In *New Directions in Media and Politics*, edited by Travis N. Ridout. New Directions in American Politics. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.

Farrell, Henry. "[The Consequences of the Internet for Politics](#)." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15, no. 1 (2012): 35–52.

NOTE: Writing Assignment - OP-ED - 1000 words max. - 25%, due March 16, 2020

Weeks 11 – 13 (March 18, 19, 23, 25, 26, 30; April 01, 02)

Module 7. Media and Politics in Comparative Perspective

Gunitsky, Seva. "[Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability](#)." *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 1 (March 2015): 42–54.

Stockmann, Daniela, and Mary E. Gallagher. "[Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China](#)." *Comparative Political Studies* 44, no. 4 (April 1, 2011): 436–67.

Walker, Christopher, and Robert W. Orttung. "[Breaking the News: The Role of State-Run Media](#)." *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 1 (January 17, 2014): 71–85.

Selections from Yesil, Bilge. *Media in New Turkey: The Origins of an Authoritarian Neoliberal State*. The Geopolitics of Information. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

Gunther, Richard, and Anthony Mughan, eds. *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*. Communication, Society, and Politics. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. (Chapter 1)

Week 14 (April 06)

Final Exam Review

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All assignments except the weekly reading responses are due electronically via the assignment submission folders on Avenue-to-Learn. The reading responses are due in class in hard copy format."

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

All late assignments will be subject to a late penalty of 2% per calendar day.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Extensions may be granted only when a student is unable to submit written work due to reasons entirely beyond the student's control. To arrange for an alternative assignment deadline, the student must contact the instructor in writing before the assignment due date. Please note that these requests will not be considered if the student fails to provide adequate documentation (e.g., medical certificates). This late assignment penalty policy will be strictly enforced. Finally, please note that under no circumstances will any course component be re-weighted. All original assignment weights will remain in effect.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be

deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.