

790:345 Mass Media and U.S. Democracy: Syllabus (Fall 2020)

MW 5:35—6:55 pm – Online: Course site on Canvas

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Office: 120 Albany St, Suite 224, Tower 1, New Brunswick NJ 08901

Hours: Stay online after class, or email for a Zoom conference

Course Description

This course examines the theoretical and actual role of mass media, including social media, in the United States: the structure of the media industry, news production, effects on political and social views, and regulations.

Every day, we are bombarded with hundreds of news items through dozens of channels: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Google, blogs, text messages, webcasts, podcasts, radio, television, the printed press, and more. It is difficult enough to endure and process the information stream, but citizens must also make up their minds not just about what to consume, but also whom to trust and what to believe. The diversity of available angles, voices, and worldviews has never been greater. The rapid and radical changes we witness in our news and information environment makes public and private decisions even more difficult. Yet, in a democratic society, so much hangs in the balance on how well-informed the citizens are.

In this course, we will investigate the connections between mass media, public opinion, and American politics. We will explore various questions: What role do the media play in US democracy? What can we expect of the media? How do the media affect political knowledge, opinion, and civic participation? What is “fake news”? How does its increasing presence affect society? What is framing, priming, and agenda-setting? How do we think about these concepts in a “post-broadcast” world? How is the Internet affecting US democracy?

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have a panoramic knowledge of the American media landscape, comprehend the roles and workings of its main segments, be able to analyze various media content, synthesize acquired knowledge and apply it to the relationship between the media and democracy, and will be able to evaluate the contributions of media to the democratic process.

Course Methodology

The class meets twice a week online, using the Canvas conference tools (Zoom or BigBlueButton). Attendance is required, and participation will be evaluated/graded. Online meetings will consist of presentations and discussions of course material and current issues relevant to the course.

All course material (except the textbook) will be available on the course’s Canvas site. Students are required to regularly use the site for attending sessions, reading and submitting assignments, participating in discussion forums, viewing the assigned videos, submitting the final paper, and signing up for the optional presentation.

The site’s chat room is always available for peer consultations. The instructor will monitor the chat room and participate in the ongoing discussion as deemed necessary.

Course Material

- **Required textbook: Shanto Iyengar (2019), *Media Politics. A Citizen's Guide* (Fourth Edition). New York: W.W. Norton. ISBN: 9780393664874. Also available in Kindle (amazon.com) and as an e-book at digital.wwnorton.com**
- **All other required readings** will be available on the Canvas course site.
- **All required documentary films** are available online for legally free viewing as listed below.

Course Requirements

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|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Nine online assignments | Maximum value: 9 x 5 points = 45% |
| 2. Final paper | Maximum value: 1 x 40 points = 40% |
| 3. Participation/Discussion | = 5% |
| 4. Attendance | 28 x 0.5 points --> 10% |
| Total | 100 points =100% |
| 5. Presentation (extra credit) | Maximum value: 1 x 10 points |

Assignment due dates will be announced on Canvas. **Final paper due: 12 noon, Monday, December 14, 2020**

Online Assignments

Online assignments consist of postings related to the subject matter in the form of a two-paragraph reaction paper/analysis/commentary. More information will follow in class and on the Canvas site.

Presentation

Students can earn extra credit by preparing a minimum 5-minute (minimum 5 slides) presentation on an instructor-approved topic, presenting it online in class. Signup will be available on Canvas for scheduling the presentations at the beginning or end of appropriate class sessions.

Grading Scale

A = 90—100	B+ = 87—89	B = 80—86	C+ = 77—79	C = 70—76	D = 60—69	F = 0—59
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Attendance

Online attendance is required to earn a good grade. You are responsible for all material presented in class and in the readings. Lectures are based on the readings, but they do not cover everything, and they may go beyond the readings to present new or additional research and examples related to the subject. All content presented through lectures, readings, and in-class examples are subject to testing through the final paper.

Late Policy

Unless *prior* arrangements are made with the instructor, no late assignments will be accepted. Exceptions will be made in case of emergencies. Late penalties may be applied on a case-by-case basis. In case of an emergency, notify the instructor via email as soon as possible.

Religious Holiday Policy

It is University policy (University Regulation on Attendance, Book 2, 2.47B, formerly 60.14f) to excuse without penalty students who are absent from class because of religious observance, and to allow the make-up of work missed because of such absence. Examinations and special required out-of-class activities shall ordinarily not be scheduled on those days when religiously observant students refrain from participating in secular activities. Absences for reasons of religious obligation shall not be counted for purposes of reporting. Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule.

Academic Integrity

The consequences of scholastic dishonesty are very serious. Rutgers's academic integrity policy can be found at: www.academicintegrity.rutgers.edu

Academic integrity means, among other things:

- Develop and write all your own assignments.
- Show in detail where the materials you use in your papers come from. Create citations whether you are paraphrasing authors or quoting them directly. Be sure always to show source and page number within the assignment and include a bibliography in the back.
- Do not fabricate information or citations in your work.
- Do not facilitate academic dishonesty for another student by allowing your own work to be submitted by others.
- If you are in doubt about any issue related to plagiarism or scholastic dishonesty, please discuss it with your instructor.

To help students and instructors, the final paper may be submitted online using the Turnitin originality check service built into the Canvas Learning Management System. See detailed instructions on the course site.

Academic Support Services

Rutgers has a variety of resources for academic support. For more information, check www.rutgers.edu/academics/academic-support

Rutgers has Learning Centers on each campus where any student can obtain tutoring and other help. For more information, check: <http://lrc.rutgers.edu>

Rutgers also has a Writing Program where students can obtain help with writing skills and assignments: <http://plangere.rutgers.edu/index.html>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Rutgers Office of Disability Services evaluates student needs and provides documentation about necessary accommodations. Students who need accommodations for online participation must do so through the Rutgers Disabilities Services Office: <https://ods.rutgers.edu>

Class Schedule

(Subject to change: All changes will be announced on Canvas; please check it before each class)

Introduction

1. 9/2 Introduction

Discussion on current media issues: Fake news and American politics in a campaign season

Historical Development and Democratic Theory

2. 9/8 (Tuesday, Change-of-designation day!)

- a. Bruce Williams and Michael Delli Carpini, "Media Regimes and American Democracy," in *After Broadcast News*
- b. Paul Starr, "Democratic Theory and the History of Communications"
- c. Barbie Zelizer "Definitions of Journalism," in *The Press*, pp. 66—80

3. 9/9

- a. Walter Lippmann, "Introduction: The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads," in *Public Opinion*
- b. Michael Schudson and Susan Tift, "American Journalism in Historical Perspective," in *The Press*

4. 9/14

- a. Lance Bennett and Serrin, "The Watchdog Role," in *The Press*, pp. 169—88
- b. Robert Entman, "The Nature and Sources of News," in *The Press*, pp. 48—65

5. 9/16

- a. Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, "Informing the Public's Discretion," in *What Americans Know About Politics and Why it Matters*.
- b. Bruce Williams and Michael Delli Carpini, "And That's the Way It [Was]," in *After Broadcast News*

Media and Policy

6. 9/21

- a. Shanto Iyengar (2019). *Media Politics*. Chapter 2: The Press and the Democratic Process. The American System in Comparative Perspective
- b. Doris Graber, Ch. 3 in *Mass Media and American Politics*
- c. Michael Schudson, "The Political Culture of News," in *Social Meanings of News*

7. 9/23

- a. Bruce Sanford and Jane Kirtley, "The First Amendment Tradition and Its Critics," in *The Press*, pp. 263—76
- b. Jane Kirtley, "Legal Evolution of the Government-News Media Relationship," in *The Press*, pp. 277—83

Ownership

8. 9/28
 - a. John Dewey, "Our Un-Free Press," in *The Later Works of Dewey*
 - b. Lance Bennett, "The Political Economy of the News"
 - c. Ben Compaine, "Domination Fantasies: Does Rupert Murdoch Control the Media? Does Anyone?"
 - d. Rupert Murdoch's 2011 letter to News Corporation stockholders (2011 Annual Report, pp. 6—11): https://materials.proxyvote.com/Approved/65248E/20110822/AR_101154/HTML2/news_corpar2011_0006.htm

9. 9/30
 - a. Robert McChesney, "So Do Commercial Media Give People What They Want?"
 - b. Martin Gilens and Craig Hertzman, "Corporate Ownership and News Bias: Newspaper Coverage..."

10. 10/5
 - a. Alex Gibney, *Park Avenue: Money, Power and the American Dream* [In preparation for class discussion, watch it online at: <http://video.pbs.org/video/2296684923/>]
 - b. Jane Mayer, "A Word from Our Sponsor," *The New Yorker*, May 27, 2013

The Media as News Organization; Critiques of News Production

11. 10/7
 - a. James Fallows, Ch. 4 & 6 in *Breaking the News*

12. 10/12
 - a. Michael Schudson, "The Sociology of News Production," in *Social Meanings of News*
 - b. Doris Graber, Ch. 4 in *Mass Media and American Politics*

Media Effects: Framing, Priming, and Agenda-setting

13. 10/14
 - a. Shanto Iyengar, Ch. 2, 4—5 in *Is Anyone Responsible?*

14. 10/19
 - a. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media"
 - b. Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman, "The Morning After: The Effect of the Network..."

Campaigning and Election Coverage

15. 10/21
 - a. Doris Graber, Ch. 8 in *Mass Media and American Politics*
 - b. Richard Johnston, Michael Hagan and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "Ads and News: The Campaign as Natural Experiment," in *The 2000 Presidential Election and Foundations of Party Politics*

16. 10/26
 - a. Shanto Iyengar (2019), *Media Politics*, Chapter 6: Campaigning through the Media

Media, Poverty, and Minorities

17. 10/28

- a. Shanto Iyengar (2019), *Media Politics*, Chapter 7: Campaigns that Matter

18. 11/2

- a. Martin Gilens, "Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the American News Media"
- b. Christopher Campbell, Ch. 4 in *Race, Myth and the News*

19. 11/4

- a. Pamela Newkirk, "The Minority Press: Pleading Our Own Cause," in *The Press*, pp. 81—91
- b. Göran Olsson, *The Black Power Mixtapes 1967—1975*, Story AB & Swedish TV, 2011, 100 min. [In preparation for class discussion, watch it online at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5_qnngyxQk]

20. 11/9

- a. Shanto Iyengar (2019), *Media Politics*, Chapter 8: News and Public Opinion
- b. Travis Dixon and Daniel Linz, "The Overrepresentation and Underrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos as Lawbreakers on Television News," in *Journal of Communication*

Terrorism, War, and Journalism

21. 11/11

- a. Bruce Williams and Michael Delli-Carpini, "9/11 and Its Aftermath," in *After Broadcast News*
- b. William Prochnau, "The Military and The Media," in *The Press*, pp. 310—31

22. 11/16

- a. John Zaller and Dennis Chiu, "Government's Little Helper: US Press Coverage of Foreign Policy..."
- b. Shanto Iyengar, "Reporters, Official Sources, and the Decline of Adversarial Journalism," Ch. 4 in *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*.

23. 11/18

- a. Jehane Noujaim, *Control Room*, Magnolia Pictures, 2004, 84 min. [In preparation for class discussion, watch it online at: www.topdocumentaryfilms.com/control-room]

New Media

24. 11/23

- a. David Karpf, "The New Generation of Political Advocacy Groups," Ch. 1 in *The MoveOn Effect*
- b. David Karpf, "Online Tools for Offline Action," Ch. 4 in *The MoveOn Effect*
- c. Shanto Iyengar (2019), *Media Politics*. Chapter 5: New Media, New Forms of Communications

11/25: NO CLASS: Change-of-Designation Day (Friday classes meet on this Wednesday)

Infotainment

25. 11/30

- a. Patricia Moy, Michael Xenos and Verena Hess, "Communication and Citizenship: Mapping the..."
- b. Geoffrey Baym, "The Daily Show and the Reinvention of Political Journalism," Ch. 6 in *From Cronkite to Colbert*

Media and the Web: Narrowcasting?

26. 12/2

- a. Dave D'Alessio & Mike Allen (2007), "The Selective Exposure Hypothesis and Media Choice Processes," in *Mass Media Effects Research*
- b. Eli Pariser, Ch. 1, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*

27. 12/7

- a. Markus Prior, Ch. 1 in *Post-Broadcast Democracy*
- b. Cass Sunstein, Ch. 3 in *Republic.com2*

28. 12/9

- a. Matthew Hindman, "2009," Ch. 3 in *The Myth of Digital Democracy*
- b. Shanto Iyengar (2019), *Media Politics*, Chapter 9: Going Public: Governing through the Media

Guest Speaker: TBA

FINAL PAPER due on Canvas: 12 noon, Monday, December 14, 2020