POLS 3316: American Politics and Mass Media
Fall 2018 T-TH: 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m., RAS 112
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Office: RAS 223 Office Hours: Mon.-Tues.: 1-4 p.m.; Wed.: 12-4 p.m.; All other meetings by appointment only.

Course Description: This course is an overview of mass media’s role within, and impact on, the American political system. Specific topics will include, but are not limited to, an examination of the role and function of the news media in our democratic system, political news media’s dynamic relationship with government officials and the public, and how elected officials use mass media to campaign and influence public opinion. Overall, this class is designed to encourage students to appreciate the importance of a free press and also critically evaluate the political power of journalists and pundits and how they use it, and how mass media can be used by government leaders, the press, and the public to try and shape the American political environment.

Student learning objectives (SLOs): Critical Thinking (CT1): Promote students’ ability to think critically about politics, the roles and authority of government institutions and officials, and the dynamic nature of the U.S. political system. Thinking critically means more than simply memorizing information, it is the ability to gather, analyze, and synthesize information that is factual and relevant to a question, issue, or event. Communication (CS1 & CS2): Students will develop the ability to express their knowledge and understanding of concepts through effective written and oral communication. Social Responsibility (SR2 & SR3): Gain an understanding of the contexts that shape and influence government official’s actions and decisions on public policy. The study of our political system allows for a greater appreciation of civic responsibility and ability to engage others in civil discourse. Personal Responsibility (PR1): Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to understand and evaluate political events, choices, and outcomes.

Bring your textbooks to every class.

Angelo State policies: As outlined in ASU’s student handbook, students are responsible for regular and punctual attendance at all scheduled classes. The university reserves the right to deal with individual cases of non-attendance. The handbook also outlines the university’s Academic Honor Code, the parameters of academic integrity, and students’ responsibilities. Decisions on Incompletes will be made after consulting with the Office of Student Affairs.

Blackboard: This course has a Blackboard site where you can obtain a copy of the syllabus and your grades. When necessary, I will post announcements or send emails about any changes to the course schedule.

Lecture outline, assignments, and exams: Depending on the pace of class discussion or unforeseen events (weather related cancellations, illness, etc.), the course outline is subject to change. Exam dates will only be changed in the event the university closes due to weather conditions or other unplanned event.
If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact me about the material that was discussed and make arrangements to acquire a copy of a classmate’s lecture notes because I no longer provide students with copies of my lecture slides or movies.

Policies on examinations: Prior to an exam all students will be required to turn off all cell phones and computers, and place all belongings under their seat. Anyone caught cheating will immediately forfeit their exam and receive an automatic “F” for the assignment. It is your responsibility to contact me if you miss an exam due to a university-related event or illness to schedule a make-up exam. Make-up exams must be taken within the two weeks following the original exam date. Failure to schedule a make-up exam within this time frame will results in an automatic “F” for that exam.

Excuses: The professor is the sole judge of all excuses. No excuse will be accepted after the fact or for students’ personal convenience. In the case of an emergency or extended absence, notification from the Office of Student Affairs will be required.

Accommodations: Any student who needs accommodations due to a disability, participation in university-related activities, religious observances, family matters, or a difficult life event should contact the Office of Student Affairs as soon as possible so they can assist you with making arrangements and notifying your professors. The office is located in the Houston Harte University Center, Room 112, and additional information can be found on ASU’s website.
Assignments and Exams

Exams (100 points each): All three exams will consist of two sections; short answer and fill-in-the-blank. The chapters covered on Exams 1 and 2 are noted in the Course Outline section of the syllabus. The Final Exam is comprehensive and will consist of new material and terms from the two previous exams.

Framing Assignment and In-Class Presentation and Discussion (100 points): Students with either individually, or in a small group depending on class size, will be assigned a current policy topic and then tasked with gathering various news outlets framing of the issue. An outline with detailed instructions and a review of the assignment will be provided in class. The instruction sheet will not be available on Blackboard. Anyone who is absent the day it is distributed or needs a replacement copy can pick up a copy during my office hours.

-This assignment is worth 100 points and is due at the end of class on Thursday, November 29th. Emailed submissions will not be accepted. Late assignments will have 10 points deducted for each day past the due date.

-In-class presentation and discussion sessions are scheduled for Tuesday, November 27th and 29th. Students must attend class on both days to earn credit for this part of the assignment. Anyone who is late more than 15 minutes late on this day will automatically be docked 25 points. Exceptions will only be made if I am formally notified by the Office of Student Affairs, a faculty advisor, or athletic office. This date is subject to change pending time constraints or schedule changes due to unplanned events (weather cancellations, instructor illness, etc.)

Pop Quizzes (25 points each): Pop quizzes will be given throughout the semester and based on the assigned reading. Quizzes can only be taken in-class. Make-ups will only be permitted for absences related to participation in a sanctioned university event and notification by a faculty advisor. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. The total number of pop quizzes given will be based on student preparedness and time constraints.

Extra Credit: A movie will be shown at the end of the semester. Only students who attend every class in which the movie is shown and discussed will have 15 points of extra credit added to their final grade.

Final grades will follow Angelo State University’s Grading Scale:
A: 100-90%; B: 89-80%; C: 79-70%; D: 69-60%; F: 59% or below

Additional Notes: Class Etiquette and Student Conduct: Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating on an assignment will receive an F for that assignment.

Computers will permitted in class but I reserve the right to prohibit their use by anyone. If you have computer related issues during the semester, contact ASU’s IT Department, not me.

Texting in class is prohibited. Anyone caught texting in class will be asked to leave the classroom.

The Department of Political Science and Philosophy is committed to support the learning of all students. As part of maintaining the decorum of the classroom, students are expected to behave appropriately and in a responsible manner. Comments made during class discussion should be well thought out and not based on personal prejudice. Any student who is disruptive or engages in ad hominem attacks during class discussion will be asked to leave.
**Course Outline:** It is your responsibility to read the assigned material, including the examples and case studies in each chapter, prior to class. You are also expected to bring your textbook to each class for reference.

**Part I: Media Purpose and Structure**

**Week 1:** August 28th and 30th  
(T) First day of class, review of the syllabus  
(TH) GD: Chapter 1, Media Power and Government Control

**Week 2:** September 4th and 6th  
(T) GD: Chapter 2, Ownership, Regulation, and Guidance of Media  
(TH) GD: Chapter 3, Press Freedom and the Law

**Week 3:** September 11th and 13th  
(T) GD: Chapter 4, Media and Politics in the Changing Media Landscape  
(TH) GD: Chapter 4 (cont., if necessary);  
NDMP: Chapter 4, Distrust of the News Media as a Symptom and Further Cause of Partisan Polarization

**Week 4:** September 18th and 20th  
(T) Lecture wrap-up and review  
(TH) **Exam 1**-Covers material assigned for Part I of the course outline (GD: Chapters 1-4 and NDMP: Chapter 4)

**Part II: Who and What Makes News**

**Week 5:** September 25th and 27th  
(T) GD: Chapter 5, News-Making and News-Reporting Routines  
(TH) GD: Chapter 6, The Media as Policy Makers

**Week 6:** October 2nd and 4th  
(T) GD: Chapter 6, (cont., if necessary)  
(TH) NDMP: Chapter 3, Political Dynamics of Framing Framing Assignment review and Q&A

**Week 7:** October 9th and 11th  
(T-TH) GD: Chapter 7, The Struggle to Control: News from the Presidency

**Week 8:** October 16th and 18th  
(T) NDMP: Chapter 13, Reassessing the Power of Speech in a Crowded Media World: Conditional Modern Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion  
(TH) GD: Chapter 8, Media Coverage of Congress and the Courts

**Week 9:** October 23rd and 25th  
(T) GD: Chapter 10, Foreign Affairs Coverage  
(TH) NDMP: Chapter 6, News Media and War

**Week 10:** October 30th  
(T) **Exam 2**-Covers material assigned for Part II of the course outline (GD: Chapters 5-8, and 10; NDMP: Chapters 3, 6, and 13
Part III: Media Effects

Week 10 (cont.): November 1st
   (TH) NDMP: Chapter 9, Negative Campaigns
   NDMP: Chapter 10, Targeting Campaign Messages
   November 1st, Last day to drop classes

Week 11: November 6th and 8th
   (T) GD: Chapter 11, Media Influence on Attitudes and Behavior
   (TH) GD: Chapter 13, Incivility, Negativity, and Bias in the Media

Week 12: November 13th and 15th
   (T-TH) NDMP: Chapter 15, Fake News: What is the Influence of Fabricated Stories and Efforts to Undermine Media Credibility?

Week 13: November 20th and 22nd
   (T) Library Day, Work on Framing Assignment.
   (TH) No Classes, Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: November 27th and 29th
   (T-TH) In-Class: Framing Assignment, presentation and discussion

Week 15: December 4th and 6th, Movie and Final Exam Review

Week 16: Final Exam (covers Chapters covered under Part III of the course outline, and terms from Exams 1 and 2)

   (T) POLS 3316: December 11th, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., RAS 112