Course Description: This course is an overview of mass media’s role within, and impact on, the American political system. Topics include an examination of the role and function of the news media in our democratic system, the press’ dynamic relationship with government officials and the public, and how elected officials use mass media to campaign and influence public opinion.

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 choices and outcomes.


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, the course instructional designer or I will post announcements or send emails about any changes to the course schedule.

Policies on examinations: Anyone caught cheating will immediately forfeit their exam and receive and automatic “F” for the assignment. Cell phones and computers must be turned off, and all belongings must be placed under your seat. If you miss an exam due to a university-recognized accommodation or illness, it is your responsibility to speak with me and schedule a makeup exam. The makeup exam must be taken within two weeks of the original exam date. Failure to do so within this time frame will result in an automatic “F” for that exam. If an emergency event prevents you from completing course exams or assignments within their given timeframes, a formal 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.

Title IX: The University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other types of sexual misconduct. Faculty members are obligated by law and university policy to report any allegations I am notified of to the Office of Title IX Compliance. Students are encouraged to report any incidents of sexual misconduct directly to Michelle Boone (michelle.boone @ angelo.edu; 325-942-2173), Director of Title IX Compliance, Mayer Administration Building, Room 210.
Assignments and Exams

Exams (100 points each): All three exams will consist of two sections; short answer and a fill-in-the-blank, or “matching,” format.
- Exams 1 and 2: The chapters covered on Exams 1 and 2 are noted in the Course Outline section of the syllabus.
- Final Exam: Comprehensive and will consist of new material from the chapters listed in Part III of the course outline and select terms from both sections of the first and second exams.

(2) In-Class Roundtables (100 points each): These assignments are designed to familiarize students with official, government resources and other credible sources for information. More detailed instructions for each assignment will be provided in class.
- The scheduled dates for either Roundtable is subject to change due to time constraints or unforeseen events (weather, power outages, etc.)
- Roundtable 1: Media bias, (TH) September 23.
- Roundtable 2: Framing and political advertising, (TH), November 4.
Students must attend class on the days scheduled for this assignment and participate in the discussion to earn credit.

Fact-Checking (100 points): This assignment and in-class discussion is designed toward developing critical thinking skills and objective evaluation of information, from both the news media and elected officials. More detailed instructions will be provided in class.

Pop Quizzes (PQ) (25 points each): Seven pop quizzes will be given throughout the semester and based on the assigned reading. Quizzes can only be taken during class. Makeup quizzes will be permitted for absences related to participation in a university sanctioned event or accommodation.
- The lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester but all quiz columns and scores will still remain visible on Blackboard. A column designated as the quiz total column will show the points earned with the lowest quiz score dropped and will be the point total calculated into your final grade.

Extra Credit: An optional pop quiz that reviews course material will be given prior to the final exam, will follow the same format as previous quizzes, and is also worth 25 points. Points earned will be added under the Extra Credit column. This is the one and only extra credit opportunity for the course.

Final grades will follow the 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.
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.

Missed deadlines: Decisions regarding missed deadlines will be made at the discretion of the instructor.
Course Outline: It is your responsibility to read the assigned material prior to class. You are also expected to bring your textbook to every class. Every class will begin with a discussion of current news events. Students are expected to be prepared to discuss news topics, especially those related to the course. The course outline is subject to change due to time constraints or unforeseen events.

As previously stated in the syllabus, I do not have internet access at home due to continuing online “harassment” activities, according to the FBI, so responses to emails will be delayed.

Part I (Chapters 1-4)

Week 1: August 24 & 30
  (T) First day of class, review of syllabus.
  (TH) Chapter 1, Mediate Democracy; review of the U.S. Constitution

Week 2: August 31 & September 2, (T-TH) Chapter 2, Why the News is the Way It Is

Week 3: September 7 & 9, (T-TH) Chapter 3, The Communication Ecology

Week 4: September 14 & 16, (T-TH) Chapter 4, Are Media Biased?

Week 5: September 21 & 23
  (T) Exam 1, covers Chapters 1-4
  (TH) Roundtable 1

Part II (Chapters 5-9)


Week 7: October 5 & 7, (T-TH) Chapter 6, Framing the News

Week 8: October 12 & 14, (T-TH) Chapter 7, Who’s Biased Now?

Week 9: October 19 & 21, (T-TH) Chapter 8, Political Advertising

Week 10: October 26 & 28, (T-TH) Chapter 9, Mediated Elections

Week 11: November 2 & 4
  (T) Exam 2, covers Chapters 5-9
  (TH) Roundtable 2

Part III (Chapters 10-11)

Week 12: November 9 & 11, (T-TH) Chapter 10, Governing, Policymaking, and the Media

Week 13: November 16 & 18 (T-TH) Chapter 11, The Future of Mediated Politics
  (TH) Review of Fact-Checking assignment

(M) November 22: Last day to drop classes.

Week 14: November 23 & 25
  (T) Library day-work on Fact Checking assignment.
  (TH) No Class-Thanksgiving break

Week 15: November 30 & December 2, (T-TH) Extra credit pop quiz
  (T) Fact-Checking assignment due; in-class discussion
  (TH) Final exam review

FINAL EXAM: Content from Exams 1 and 2; Chapters covered in Part III of the course outline.
  (TH) December 9th: 8 -10 a.m. (Ras239)