

COMM 7713: Political Communication Autumn 2017

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Class Meeting Times: Tuesday and Thursday 9:35am - 10:55am

Class Location: 3116 Derby Hall

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to provide an overview of the role of communication in politics. We will explore research from the fields of communication and political science concerning the content of a variety of “legacy” and “new” forms of political communication. We will discuss the role of traditional print and television news media, entertainment media forms with political relevance, online media, face-to-face interpersonal communication, and various forms of technologically mediated social interactions in politics (e.g., social media, discussion forums, news article comment spaces). Our emphasis will be considering the role these can play – good and bad – in democratic functioning. Although the primary emphasis of this course will be on American politics, we will take the time to consider where the U.S. stands from a broader perspective, and I welcome hearing from students with interests in other specific political systems.

This course will expose students to a breadth of scholarship on political communication from both communication and political science (and sometimes, other related fields). Students will become familiar with theoretical, methodological and pragmatic issues in political communication scholarship. Students will learn to evaluate original empirical research and how to chart future directions to advance theory and evidence.

Requirements & Grading

There will be no textbook for the course; instead, readings from a variety of sources have been assembled and are available via PDFs posted on the course Canvas site. The reading load for this course is reasonably heavy, and a primary function of the course will be to evaluate those readings and use them as specific examples of scholarship within the various topic domains covered in the course. Readings for each topic area typically include some sort of overview or theory paper as well as empirical papers focusing on specific topics. I have endeavored to include variety in methodological and theoretical approaches across weeks. Inclusion of a reading on the syllabus is not necessarily an endorsement; read everything with a healthy dose of skepticism, while also realizing that holding unrealistic standards for evidence inhibits advance as well as not recognizing limitations of evidence. There is for more to read than I can assign in

this course, and I hope students will explore relevant literature on their own. I am happy to guide individual students to additional work within their areas of interest.

Evaluations of student performance will be based on several criteria: in-class discussion leader duties, general in-class participation (on non-discussion leader days), and four integration/extension papers. The weighting of these evaluation criteria will be the following:

Discussion leading	15%
General in-class participation	25%
Integration/extension papers (4 @ 15% each)	<u>60%</u>
Total:	100%

When letter grades are given for an assignment, they will be converted into the following numeric values for final grade calculation:

A+, A, A-	= 100, 95, 91
B+, B, B-	= 88, 85, 81
C+, C, C-	= 78, 75, 71
D+, D, D-	= 68, 65, 61
E (F)	= 0

I will use the standard OSU grade lettering scheme to convert numeric course grades back to a final course letter grade. Note that the OSU grade lettering scheme does not incorporate rounding.

How the Course Will Run

I'll be up front in saying that I don't like that our course is scheduled to meet in relatively short, twice-weekly sessions. I find graduate seminars work better with fewer, longer sessions. But, it is what it is, I tried to get it changed and it wasn't practical, so I've worked to try to make the best of this in the design and implementation of the course.

Across the semester, I'm treating "weeks" as the unit of course content. In general – possibly with some exceptions – my plan is to devote Tuesdays of each week to a combination of mini-lecture by me – summarizing the topic area, discussing matters that may not arise in assigned readings, and some discussion of the assigned readings themselves. So, students should have read all the assigned readings in advance of Tuesday's class and come prepared for listening and some discussion. Thursdays will be discussion-oriented, with one student discussion leader assigned each week. On Thursdays, we'll more closely examine details about the assigned readings, and the student discussion leader (and I) will bring additional information to help round out discussion. More detail on student discussion leading is presented below.

Twice this semester we have only half weeks (due to Fall Break and Thanksgiving) with only a Tuesday session. During those weeks, I have not currently assigned any readings. However, as we get closer to them, I may assign readings on "matters arising" – new findings, additional works that were raised by students in class in preceding weeks, and so on. Otherwise, I will have

integrative or “matters arising” topics for us to discuss on those days that go beyond what is currently listed on the syllabus. Stay tuned...

Discussion Leading

Each student will sign up to serve as a discussion leader for one week during the course of the semester. In addition to reading the required readings, discussion leaders will read (and be prepared to discuss) additional work on the same general topic that builds upon, contradicts, or fills gaps in the assigned reading. To do so they must seek out this additional relevant material, probably in consultation with the instructor.

In order to structure the discussion in the class, discussion leaders should develop a number of questions – and for themselves, the answers to those questions – that will serve as the fodder for class discussion. Questions are likely to pertain to some combination of the theory, method, or connections across papers and topics in the assigned readings – including across topics/weeks when relevant. Discussion leaders should distribute their questions via email at least 24 hours before class (i.e., by Wednesday AM) so that students can think about them in advance and bring copies to class. In addition to these questions, discussion leaders should include in the mailing the list of additional readings they did for the topic (for reference).

And, of course, discussion leaders will play a major role in moderating class discussion on Thursdays. For now, by the end of the first week of class students should send to me a full ranking of the available dates (all weeks other than the first week and “integration” weeks). I will assign students to weeks to maximize the number of students getting topics ranked high on their lists.

Discussion leaders will be evaluated based on: (1) the quality of their questions; (2) the apparent depth of their reading, both of assigned and additional readings; and (3) their performance in leading the discussion. Discussion leading will be worth 15% of the course grade and will be given as a letter grade.

General In-Class Participation

Just as discussion leaders will be evaluated on their preparation and development of questions for the class, students not serving as a discussion leader for a given class session will be evaluated on their participation and ability to **intelligently** discuss the assigned readings. The first, minimum component of this is class attendance. I do expect students to attend all class sessions unless serious circumstances make it impossible, in which case I will expect notification in advance and documentation after the fact for the absence in order to avoid it impacting your participation grade.

Beyond attendance, ALL students will be expected to participate fully in the seminar by both asking questions and answering them during **each and every topic (i.e., week)**. While a reasonable quantity of verbal participation is a necessary condition for a positive evaluation, it is not sufficient. The quality of questions and answers will be considered when evaluating student participation and quality will be judged by how informed the questions are by the assigned readings and quality thinking. High quantity with low quality will be considered equivalent to

not participating at all; it is essentially a distraction. **Students engaged in work unrelated to the course during class periods (e.g., emailing, Web surfing, texting, data analysis, etc., will be docked a full day's participation credit and will be asked to leave the class for the remainder of the session (and I'm really serious about this...)).**

I seriously evaluate class participation and weight it accordingly. In-class participation will be worth 25% of the course grade and will be derived numerically based on a percentage of the maximum possible score across all class meetings in which values for a given class period will be zero, one, or two, with two indicating meeting expectations for a graduate seminar (multiple meaningful contributions during 3-hours of class weekly) and zero indicating non-attendance or little to no participation during the class.

Integration/Extension Papers

For four weeks/topics over the course of the semester, students will write 5-7 page "integration/extension" papers. These papers will be focused on evaluating and integrating the evidence in the assigned readings for that topic, along with a modest amount of additional reading to be done beyond the assigned readings that allow the student to extend what they've learned from assigned readings. These papers should NOT be simple summaries of what the assigned (or new) articles have said or found. Rather, they should be original thoughts by students about how the ideas of the assigned (and additional) papers may be pulled together for greater understanding, and to offer directions for future scholarship.

Integration papers are due by the start of class on Tuesday mornings at the start of the given topic; that is, students should be writing these papers before class interactions on the topic rather than after, and using the ideas they have developed to help advance class discussion. Integration papers are each worth 15%. For now, by the end of the first week of class students should inform the instructor on which four weeks they intend to submit their integration papers.

Pro tip: You might want to consider choosing to do one of your papers on the same week you are serving as a discussion leader. Just sayin'. ☺

Office Hours

I will hold regular office hours during which I encourage you to come to see me to discuss course-related matters, particularly as they relate to the two papers for the course and discussion leading. If your schedule does not permit visiting me during formal office hours, please let me know and I will attempt to arrange an alternative time by appointment. Please do take advantage of this resource to ask questions or clarification, seek additional information, and so forth. It is my job to make sure that you have every opportunity to learn the course material, and I will make every effort to do so. But, it is also incumbent upon you to seek help when you think you need it, and to not delay in seeking that help until the last minute (especially with regard to papers and discussion leading), when it may be too late.

Etiquette

We want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all. It is *especially* important that we (1) display respect for all members of the classroom – including the instructor and students, (2) pay attention to and participate in all class sessions and activities; (3) avoid unnecessary disruption during class time; and (4) avoid racist, sexist, homophobic or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus / classroom. This is not an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, they represent the minimum standards that help make the classroom a productive place for all concerned.

I want to particularly address the role of laptops and other internet-connected devices in the classroom. Although I realize that these can be valuable tools for reviewing electronic copies of class readings, taking notes during class, and even (on occasion) looking up something online for class discussion purposes, they also serve as a major potential source of distraction – via email, Web surfing, and the ability to work surreptitiously on matters unrelated to class. Doing the latter can be very distracting, not only to the individual with the computer, but also to those around him/her. It is the equivalent of reading a newspaper, listening to music with headphones, or having a private conversation during class. So, please do not ever use your computing device to engage in activities that are not directly course related. Doing so will lead to a zero for class participation for that day plus me publicly asking the student doing so to leave class for the day. If this becomes an issue for multiple students, I may have to resort to banning the use of computers in class.

Some Words About Academic Honesty

It is your responsibility to complete your own work as best you can in the time provided. ***Cheating, plagiarism, and falsification of laboratory or other data are serious offenses, and it is my responsibility to make sure they do not occur.*** If you are unclear about definitions of plagiarism, read the Code of Student Conduct at http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp Academic misconduct will be punished to the fullest extent possible. Anyone **suspected** of academic misconduct should expect to have a record of the matter forwarded to the Committee on Academic Misconduct as required by faculty rule. If a student is found guilty of academic misconduct, the most likely outcome will be failure of the course and loss of GA funding.

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request. Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and seeking available assistance in a timely manner. If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me to arrange an appointment by the second week of classes. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs and explore potential accommodations. If you have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services (ODS) but believe you may need accommodations, I encourage you to do so. I rely on the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in Rm. 150 Pomerene Hall for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies.

TOPICS and READINGS

August 22 -24: Course Introduction

- Jamieson, K. H., & Kenski, K. (2017). Political communication: Then, now and beyond. In K. Kenski & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political communication* (pp. 3-12). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jamieson, K. H. (2017). Creating the hybrid field of political communication: A five-decade-long evolution of the concept of effects. In K. Kenski & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political communication* (pp. 15-46). New York: Oxford University Press.

August 29-31: Normative Foundations

- Gurevitch, M., & Blumler, J. G. (1990). Political communication systems and democratic values. In J. Lichtenberg (Ed.) *Democracy and the mass media: A collection of essays* (pp. 269-289). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2000). Evaluating media performance. In *A virtuous circle: Political communications in postindustrial societies* (pp. 22-35). Cambridge University Press.
- Althaus, S. L. (2012). What's good and bad in political communication research? In H. A. Semetko & M. Scammell (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of political communication* (pp. 96-111). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

September 5-7: White House Communication Efforts

- Kumar, M. J. (2007). Creating an effective communications operation. In *Managing the president's message: The White House communications operation* (pp. 1-32). Baltimore, MD: John's Hopkins University Press.
- Kumar, M. J. (2007). White House communications advisers. In *Managing the president's message: The White House communications operation* (pp. 119-177). Baltimore, MD: John's Hopkins University Press.
- Kumar, M. J. (2007). The press secretary to the president. In *Managing the president's message: The White House communications operation* (pp. 178-221). Baltimore, MD: John's Hopkins University Press.

September 12-14: Legacy News Media I: Content

- Soroka, S. N. (2012). The gatekeeping function: Distributions of information in media and the real world. *Journal of Politics*, 74, 514-528.
- Sobieraj, S., & Berry, J. M. (2011). From incivility to outrage: Political discourse in blogs, talk radio, and cable news. *Political Communication*, 28, 19-41.
- Budak, C., Goel, S., & Rao, J. M. (2016). Fair and balanced? Quantifying media bias through crowdsourced content analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80(S1), 250-271.
- Patterson, T. E. (2016). *News coverage of the 2016 general election: How the press failed the voters*. Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy.

September 19-21: Legacy News Media II: Selection and Effects

- Garrett, R. K., & Stroud, N. J. (2014). Partisan paths to exposure diversity: Differences in pro- and counterattitudinal news consumption. *Journal of Communication, 64*, 680-701.
- Weeks, B. E., Ksiazek, T. B., & Holbert, R. L. (2016). Partisan enclaves or shared media experiences? A network approach to understanding citizens' political news environments. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 60*, 248-268.
- Eveland, W. P., Jr. & Garrett, R. K. (2017). Communication modalities and political knowledge. In K. Kenski & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political communication* (pp. 517-530). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Levendusky, M. S. (2013). Why do partisan media polarize viewers? *American Journal of Political Science, 57*, 611-623.

September 26-28: Political Advertising

- Fridkin, K. L., & Kenney, P. J. (2012). The impact of negative campaigning on citizens' actions and attitudes. In H. A. Semetko & M. Scammell (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of political communication* (pp. 173-185). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ridout, T. N., Franz, M., Goldstein, K. M., & Feltus, W. J. (2012). Separation by television program: Understanding the targeting of political advertising in presidential elections. *Political Communication, 29*, 1-23.
- Geer, J. G. (2012). The news media and the rise of negativity in presidential campaigns. *PS: Political Science & Politics, 45*, 422-427.
- Parry-Giles, S. J. (2016). *A report on presidential advertising and the 2016 general election: A referendum on character*. Center for Political Communication and Civic Leadership.

October 3-5: Entertainment Media

- Prior, M. (2005). News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout. *American Journal of Political Science, 49*, 577-592.
- Delli Carpini, M. X. (2017). The political effects of entertainment media. In K. Kenski & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political communication* (pp. 851-870). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Young, D. G. (2017). Theories and effects of political humor: Discounting cues, gateways, and the impact of incongruities. In K. Kenski & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political communication* (pp. 871-884). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Long, J. A., & Eveland, W. P., Jr. (2016). *Entertainment use and political ideology: Liking worldviews to media content*. Working manuscript.

October 10: Integration Hour

Readings TBA.

October 17-19: Political Networks, Conversation and Deliberation I: Selection and Content

Eveland, W. P., Morey, A. C., & Hutchens, M. J. (2011). Beyond deliberation: New directions for the study of informal political conversation from a communication perspective. *Journal of Communication, 61*, 1082-1103.

Gervais, B. T. (2014). Following the news? Reception of uncivil partisan media and the use of incivility in political expression. *Political Communication, 31*, 564-583.

Cowan, S. K., & Baldassarri, D. (2017). "It could turn ugly": Selective disclosure of attitudes in political discussion networks. *Social Networks*.

Eveland, W. P., Jr., & Appiah, O. (2017). *A national conversation about race? Political discussion across lines of racial difference*. Working manuscript.

October 24-26: Political Networks, Conversation and Deliberation II: Effects

Bello, J. (2012). The dark side of disagreement? Revisiting the effect of disagreement on political participation. *Electoral Studies, 31*, 782-795.

Thorson, E. (2014). Beyond opinion leaders: How attempts to persuade foster political awareness and campaign learning. *Communication Research, 41*, 353-374.

Kim, N. (2016). Beyond rationality: The role of anger and information in deliberation. *Communication Research, 43*, 3-24.

Druckman, J. N., Levendusky, M. S., & McLain, A. (2017). No need to watch: How the effects of partisan media can spread via interpersonal discussions. *American Journal of Political Science*.

October 31 – November 2: Politics Online I: Selectivity and News

Messing, S., & Westwood, S. J. (2014). Selective exposure in the age of social media: Endorsements trump partisan source affiliation when selecting news online. *Communication Research, 41*, 1042-1063.

Bakshy, E., Messing, S., & Adamic, L. A. (2015). Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook. *Science, 348*, 1130-1132.

Flaxman, S., Goel, S., & Rao, J. M. (2016). Filter bubbles, echo chambers, and online news consumption. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 80*(S1), 298-320.

Kobayashi, T., & Inamasu, K. (2015). The knowledge leveling effect of portal sites. *Communication Research, 42*, 482-502.

November 7-9: Politics Online II: Forums for Sharing and Talk

Bond, R. M., Fariss, C. J., Jones, J. J., Kramer, A. D. I., Marlow, C., Settle, J. E., & Fowler, J. H. (2012). A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization. *Nature, 489*, 295-298.

Neubaum, G., & Krämer, N. C. (2017). Opinion climates in social media: Blending mass and interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research*.

Muddiman, A., & Stroud, N. J. (2017). News values, cognitive biases, and partisan incivility in comment sections. *Journal of Communication*.

Graham, T., Jackson, D., & Wright, S. (2016). 'We need to get together and make ourselves heard': Everyday online spaces as incubators of political action. *Information, Communication & Society, 19*, 1373-1389.

November 14-16: Political Socialization

- McDevitt, M. (2016). Political socialization. In C. R. Berger, & M. E. Roloff (Eds.) *The international encyclopedia of interpersonal communication* (Vol. 1). John Wiley & Sons.
- Lee, N. J., Shah, D. V., & McLeod, J. M. (2012). Processes of political socialization: A communication mediation approach to youth civic engagement. *Communication Research, 40*, 669-697.
- Egerly, S., Thorson, K., Thorson, E., Vraga, E. K., & Bode, L. (2017). Do parents still model news consumption? Socializing news use among adolescents in a multi-device world. *New Media & Society*.

November 21: Integration Hour

Readings TBA.

November 28-30: Comparative Political Communication

- de Vreese, C. H. (2017). Comparative political communication research. In K. Kenski & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political communication*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brüggemann, M., Engesser, S., Büchel, F., Humprecht, E., & Castro, L. (2014). Hallin and Mancini revisited: Four empirical types of western media systems. *Journal of Communication, 64*, 1037-1065.
- Nir, L. (2012). Cross-national differences in political discussion: Can political systems narrow deliberation gaps? *Journal of Communication, 62*, 553-570.

December 5: Wrapping Up

Readings TBA