

## COMM 4814: Political Communication Spring 2017

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Lecture Times: Monday & Wednesday 9:35am - 10:55am

Lecture Location: 388 Arps 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 “new” and “old” forms of political communication. We will discuss the role of traditional news media, soft news and entertainment, online media, face-to-face interpersonal communication, and various forms of technologically mediated social interactions in politics, each from the perspectives of both the public and the government. We will also consider the cognitive and behavioral effects of political communication on the public and the political system. Although the primary emphasis of this course will be on American politics, we will at times discuss how the American system differs from others, and I welcome hearing from students with interests in other specific political systems.

### 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 Carmen site. Since the readings are made available to you at no cost and with easy access, I will expect you to have read and understood the assigned readings *before* class, and that you will be prepared to discuss them *in* class. Quizzes on the readings will account for nearly 1/3 of your course grade. Much of class time will be spent clarifying, expanding upon, and applying the readings so involvement in this process is an important part of the course. If students are not prepared to discuss the readings they’ve done before class, it will be difficult to cover the material in class. Key readings are listed on this syllabus, but for many topic areas I also will be posting brief additional readings (e.g., news articles, blog posts) throughout the semester that will help shape discussion and must also be read (and will be fair game for exams).

More generally, you will also find it useful to keep up with local, national, and world political events during this class – both through text-based media (e.g., online newspaper sources) and in video format (e.g., political talk and/or opinion programs on cable television). These sources of information will not only keep you up-to-date on political events of the day – something all of us should do as citizens of a democracy, especially in an election year – but they will also be the

source of examples and assignments that will be used to illustrate concepts discussed in class. You'll be better off knowing and understanding a political topic used as an example in class if you've already read about it that morning in a newspaper.

Your grade for the semester will be based on the following evaluation criteria:

Class participation		10%
In class / homework assignments:		15%
Reading quizzes:		20%
Midterm exam:	3/1	25%
Final exam:	4/28	30%

The grading scale for this course follows the standard OSU grading scheme, which does not use rounding:

A =	93-100%	C =	73-76%
A- =	90-92%	C- =	70-72%
B+ =	87-89%	D+ =	67-69%
B =	83-86%	D =	63-66%
B- =	80-82%	D- =	60-62%
C+ =	77-79%	E =	0-59%

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

Class Participation: I will take attendance on random days throughout the semester, more often if overall class attendance seems to wane; I will also consider being in class on quiz days as attendance (above and beyond whatever grade you earn on the quiz that day). Excuses for missed days will need to be documented, and in nearly all cases except for emergencies must be provided in advance of class. I will also assess the extent to which students regularly contribute to class in a positive manner (i.e., participate in class discussion in an informed manner, demonstrate having read course readings) as well as those who rarely participate; this will be a significant component of the grade. The combination of these two factors – attendance being measured objectively and class contributions being measured subjectively – are together worth 10% of your course grade.

Reading Quizzes: Unless otherwise communicated, the first day of each new course topic will begin with a brief 4-5 question quiz on the readings assigned for that topic. Students will be provided with a brief list of questions they should be able to answer from the readings for each course topic. The reading quizzes will evaluate students' ability to answer those questions prior to addressing the material in class. Many of these questions will reappear in some form on the

midterm and final exams. Readings quizzes are collectively worth 20% of the course grade (2% per quiz). Students must be present (and on time!) to take the readings quizzes; there will be no makeups. I will discuss accommodations for students with a valid, documented, excuse who notify me in advance of class time. See section below on “Schedule Conflicts.” In any case, I will drop the lowest quiz score for each student.

In class / homework assignments: Throughout the semester students will complete a number of relatively brief in class or homework assignments. These may include written assessments of political media content or conversations and reflections on course readings or lecture content. In total, these assignments will account for 15% of the course grade. Students must be present in class in order to receive credit for the in class assignments.

Midterm and Final Exams: This course will employ a midterm and a final exam. These exams will be designed to evaluate your recall, comprehension and ability to apply the information presented in the course. The exams will cover both lecture and reading material, and will include both objective and subjective components. If the times/dates for the exams conflict with religious holiday, bring this to my attention by the end of the first week of class so we can negotiate potential alternative arrangements. Having more than one exam on the same day, or plans to miss class to travel for a holiday, wedding, etc. does not constitute a reason to miss an exam in this course.

After the first week of class, only those with a *prior* formal, written excuse from a doctor indicating they were physically unable to come to the exam will have exams rescheduled; rescheduled exams will NOT be the same exam given to the rest of the class. Any others who miss an exam will receive a zero for that exam and, most likely, fail the course. The midterm is worth 25% of your course grade and the final is worth 30% of your course grade.

### Office Hours

I will hold regular office hours (see above) during which I encourage you to come to see me to discuss course-related matters. 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. If you do not seek input when your grades indicate you need it, there is little I can do to help you. ***For those of you who are graduating seniors do not put yourself in the position to miss graduation because of your performance in this course – take advantage of every opportunity I can offer to do well.***

## Course Policies

**Schedule Conflicts.** All exams and reading quizzes must be taken on the designated dates and times. It is your responsibility to note the day/time of exams/assignments now and make sure you will be able to attend all the exams and complete the assignments. If you have any schedule conflicts, you should either rearrange your schedule so that you can complete all of the work or drop the class. No make-ups are allowed except in the case of an extreme emergency. In the rare event that an emergency arises, it is the student's responsibility to 1) inform the instructor prior to the exam time, and 2) provide the instructor with written documentation of the emergency. Documentation must be a written doctor's note explaining the necessity of the absence or the professor's PRIOR approval of a copy of the "Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class" (see <http://shs.osu.edu/posts/documents/absence-excuse-form2.pdf>). Please keep in mind that any falsification of the information on this form is considered academic misconduct and can lead to severe consequences.

**Student Performance.** All students (especially graduating seniors!) who "need" this course for whatever reason (scholarships, completing minors, graduating) should work especially hard to ensure that they will pass it. There will NOT be opportunities for students to re-take exams or re-complete assignments in order to raise grades. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that he or she receives a passing final grade by working diligently and responsibly throughout the quarter. No exceptions will be made. Grades will be calculated strictly by the criteria set forth in the syllabus.

**Email Etiquette.** At times I will use the Canvas system to send a mass email to the class. Use of a "reply to all" function or other means of contacting fellow students en masse without their permission is considered spam. Any instance of a student spamming members of the class (e.g., seeking lecture notes) will result in a 2-point deduction from the course grade for each occurrence.

## Classroom Civility

We want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all. In a communication class, 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 (e.g., having private conversations, reading the newspaper, surfing the Web or watching videos on a laptop or tablet computer, doing work for other classes, receiving cell phone calls and text messages); 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. If you cannot maintain these standards, you WILL be asked to leave the classroom so that others have the opportunity to learn unimpeded. I encourage students to express their views in a civil manner, and to debate and critique one another's arguments on the basis of evidence and logic.

## Student Use of Technology in the Classroom

Although I believe the use of laptops or tablets can be used for productive purposes in class, it is my observation (reinforced by academic research) that they primarily serve as distractions – both to those who use them, and those nearby. Although some might argue laptops are beneficial for taking notes, considerable scientific research demonstrates that **USING LAPTOPS FOR TAKING NOTES IMPEDES LEARNING COMPARED TO PAPER AND PEN NOTETAKING**. If you'd like to read a brief summary of just some of the evidence, [click here](#) or check out the *Scientific American* article “A Learning Secret: Don't Take Notes with a Laptop” on Carmen under “General Information.” Here are a few quotes from that paper that might get you thinking about whether or not you should bring your iPad or laptop in class:

*When participants were given an opportunity to study with their notes before the final assessment, once again those who took longhand notes outperformed laptop participants. Because longhand notes contain students' own words and handwriting, they may serve as more effective memory cues by recreating the context (e.g., thought processes, emotions, conclusions) as well as content (e.g., individual facts) from the original learning session...*

*...In the Mueller and Oppenheimer studies, all laptops were disconnected from the internet, thus eliminating any disruption from email, instant messaging, surfing, or other online distractions. In most typical college settings, however, internet access is available, and evidence suggests that when college students use laptops, they spend 40% of class time using applications unrelated to coursework, are more likely to fall off task, and are less satisfied with their education.*

It's your money, and your education. So, as long as you use your laptop or tablet in a responsible manner that is not distracting to other students, I'll permit it. But, cellphone use in this class is banned; those who use cellphones in class will lost any class participation credit earned in the class that day. And, with regards to tablets and laptops, anyone using their device in a manner that is distracting to others (using email or social media, watching movies, playing games, online shopping) will be asked to leave class and/or will have any class attendance points for that day scored as zero.

## Some Words About Academic Honesty

It is your responsibility to complete your own work as best you can in the time provided. The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process.” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, possession of unauthorized materials during an examination, and falsification of laboratory or other data. Ignorance of the University's *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of*

*Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct at [http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource\\_csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp)

Academic misconduct is a serious offense, and it is my responsibility to make sure it does not occur. If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). If COAM determines that you have violated the University's *Code of Student Conduct*, the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about this policy or what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact your professor or TA or visit the COAM web page at <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html>.

### **Helpful Hints to Get the Most Out of This Class**

**Alter Your Expectations for Studying.** College students greatly underestimate the effort and time it takes to do a quality job of learning the new and complex material that is a part of most of your courses. Spending at least 2-3 hours per week outside of class per credit hour is the norm for good achievement. However, if the course is particularly difficult or if your skills are not as great as the typical students', you will likely need to spend even more time to do well in the course.

**Keep the Big Picture in Mind.** Not only must you learn quite an amount of information that you might consider rather detailed, but you should also strive to understand the broader themes and context at all times. Keep in mind what you have learned in previous readings and lectures. Themes work best when understood together rather than in isolation.

**If You Have Problems, Seek Solutions Early.** For example, if you do poorly on an exam, see me at that time (instead of later in the course). In addition, the office of Counseling and Consultation Service offers a variety of services aimed at helping students resolve personal difficulties and acquire the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that will enable them to take full advantage of their experiences at Ohio State. It is located at the Younkin Success Center (4<sup>th</sup> Floor), 1640 Neil Avenue, phone: 614-292-5766, email: [ccs@studentlife.osu.edu](mailto:ccs@studentlife.osu.edu), Web page: <http://www.ccs.ohio-state.edu/> If I can help you or point you in the right direction, I certainly will, but you must ask for help first.

## **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.

## Course Schedule and Readings

(Students are responsible for any changes to this syllabus announced in class.)

DATE	TOPIC	REQUIRED READINGS
1/9	Introduction & Course Objectives	No readings
1/11, 1/16	Overview of Political Communication Research	<b>Norris</b> (2000) Ch. 2: "Evaluating Media Performance"
1/18, 1/23, 1/25, 1/30	Political Public Relations	<b>Maltese</b> (1992) Ch. 1: "Introduction" <b>Kumar</b> (2007) Ch. 4: "White House Communications Advisers" (only pp. 119-136, 143-155, and 165-168) <b>Kumar</b> (2007) Ch. 5: "The Press Secretary to the President"
2/1, 2/6, 2/8	Political Advertising	<b>West</b> (2014) Ch. 1: "The History of Advertising" <b>Geer</b> (2012) "The News Media and the Rise of Negativity in Presidential Campaigns" <b>Parry-Giles et al.</b> (2016) "2016 Presidential Advertising..."
2/13, 2/15, 2/20	Traditional News Media	<b>Bennett</b> (2009) Ch. 2: "News Content: Four Information Biases That Matter" <b>Rosenstiel et al.</b> (2007) Ch. 3: "'I-Teams' and 'Eye Candy'" <b>Maher</b> (2000) "11 O'Clock Blues" <b>Patterson</b> (2016) "News Coverage of the 2016..."
2/22, 2/27	Presidential Debates	<b>Schroeder</b> (2008) Ch. 1: "The Predebate Debate" <b>2012 Debate Memorandum of Understanding</b> <b>Stelter &amp; Byers</b> (2016) "One Thing..." <b>*Also view (even if you have before) one 2016 presidential debate between Clinton and Trump.</b>
<b>3/1</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	No readings
3/6, 3/8, 3/13, 3/15, 3/20	The "New" Media Environment: Talk and Entertainment	<b>Baum</b> (2003) Ch. 2 "Soft News and the Accidentally Attentive Public" <b>Prior</b> (2007) Ch. 8: "Divided by Choice" <b>Sobieraj &amp; Berry</b> (2011) "From Incivility to Outrage" <b>Gierzynski</b> (2014) "Harry Potter..."
3/22, 3/27	Political Networks, Conversations and Deliberation	<b>Walsh</b> (2004) Ch. 1: "Introduction" <b>Mutz</b> (2006) Ch. 2: "Encountering Mixed Political Company"
3/29, 4/3, 4/5	Politics Online	<b>Wojcieszak &amp; Mutz</b> (2009) "Online Groups and Political Discourse" <b>Shanahan</b> (2016) "How News Sites' Online Comments..." <b>Seargeant &amp; Tagg</b> (2016) "The Filter Bubble..." <b>Garrett</b> (2016) "Facebook's Problem is More Complicated..."
4/10, 4/12	A Comparative Perspective on Political Communication	<b>Iyengar &amp; McGrady</b> (2007) Ch. 2: "The Press and the Democratic Process" <b>Freedom House</b> (2016) "Freedom of the Press 2016"
4/17	Political Socialization of Youth	<b>McLeod, Eveland, &amp; Horowitz</b> (1998) "Going Beyond Adults and Voter Turnout"
4/19, 4/24	Effects of Election Campaigns	<b>Iyengar &amp; McGrady</b> (2007) Ch. 9: "Campaigns that Matter" <b>Campbell</b> (2016) "Forecasting the 2016 American National Elections"
<b>Fri. 4/28</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>10-11:45am in our normal classroom; 80 minutes exam time</b>

**Note: No classes on 1/16 (MLK Day) or 3/13 and 3/15 (Spring Break).**



## Full Citations for Book-Based Assigned Readings

- Baum, M. A. (2003). *Soft news goes to war: Public opinion and American foreign policy in the new media age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bennett, W. L. (2009). *News: The politics of illusion* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Longman.
- Hindman, M. (2009). *The myth of digital democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Iyengar, S., & McGrady, J. A. (2007). *Media politics: A citizen's guide*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Kumar, M. J. (2007). *Managing the president's message: The White House communications operation*. Baltimore: John's Hopkins University Press.
- Maltese, J. A. (1992). *Spin control: The White House Office of Communications and the management of presidential news*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Mutz, D. C. (2006). *Hearing the other side: Deliberative versus participatory democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2000). *A virtuous circle: Political communications in postindustrial societies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Prior, M. (2007). *Post-broadcast democracy; How media choice increases inequality in political involvement and polarizes elections*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenstiel, T., Just, M., Belt, T., Pertilla, A., Dean, W., & Chinni, D. (2007). *We interrupt this newscast: How to improve local news and win ratings, too*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Schroeder, A. (2008). *Presidential debates: Fifty years of high-risk TV*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Walsh, K. C. (2004). *Talking about politics: Informal groups and social identity in American politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- West, D. M. (2014). *Air wars: Television advertising and social media in election campaigns 1952-2012*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.