

POL367: Mass Media in American Politics

Spring 2014, M/W 2:30-3:50 pm
Javits Lecture Hall (Rm. 101)

Instructor: Patrick Lown

Email: Patrick.Lown@stonybrook.edu

Office: SBS Building S753

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30pm, by appointment

TA: Jacqueline Karpf

Email: Jacqueline.Karpf@stonybrook.edu

Office: Psych B 127

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30-2:30

Course Description:

The last century has seen an incredible revolution in the distribution of political and commercial information and the true birth of the Mass Media. Particularly, the last decade has seen the creation and incorporation of social media and the internet which threatens the classic business model of news media organizations. What does this mean and where are we heading? In this course we will focus on understanding media organizations, their relationships with citizens, and their effects on democracy.

Course Objectives:

This course has three main objectives:

1. To teach and encourage you to think *critically* about your political environment and how you are shaped by the information you consume. More even than you are what you eat, you are what you watch, listen to, read, and *believe*. Ultimately, do we live up to our expectations as 'good citizens' of our democracy?
2. To help introduce you to a broad range of scholarly research that helps us to understand mass political behavior and its connections to our media environments. How does what we consume lead us to engage and participate, or not?
3. To further hone a wide variety of academic skills that you have (hopefully) already been developing. There will be opportunities to both speak and particularly *write* about the course material in which you will find yourself immersed.

Required Texts

Bennett, W. Lance (2012), *News: The Politics of Illusion, 9th Edition*

Additional reading materials and the most recently updated syllabus can be found on Blackboard at <https://blackboard.stonybrook.edu/>

Course Policies:

Attendance: As this is a lecture format course, the majority of the material will be presented in the lectures and discussed in class. This means that attendance in class is critical. And although lecture is the primary mode of the course, I also expect you to engage with the material, ask questions, and generally welcome discussion. The more you think about and try to use what we discuss in class, the better you will understand it, and the better you will do on the exams. Approximately 2/3 of items on the quizzes and exams will come from the lecture with the remaining 1/3 exclusively from the reading. There will be a modest overlap between material presented in class and the material covered in the reading, but the lecture will not be based

directly on the material from the book. PowerPoint presentations used in class will be made available online.

Cell phones: Not allowed. Please silence them and put them away while class is in progress.

Laptops: Please mute the sound at the beginning of class. It should go without saying that laptops should be for note taking purposes only, which is what I will assume is what you are doing. Please do not use your devices for any purpose that will disrupt class. This is a matter of respect for yourselves and the other students in the class as well as myself.

Etiquette: I realize that sometimes arriving late or leaving early is unavoidable; however, this can be disruptive to other students. Please do your best to enter quietly if class has already begun, and to exit quietly if you must leave early. Mostly, this is about courtesy. Use your best manners and judgment. Also, if you must leave early, please mention it to me if possible at the beginning of class or during break.

Plagiarism and cheating: If I suspect you have violated the school ethics code regarding academic integrity, I will report to the Academic Judiciary and the matter will be pursued to the full extent necessary. Please do your own work and avoid putting yourself in a position that this becomes necessary; it is not a pleasant experience for anyone involved.

Late assignments: Quizzes cannot be made up. Late assignments will be accepted for 75% credit the first week after deadline. After a week, late assignments will no longer be accepted. If you find that a personal problem is coming in the way of your academic work, please come talk to me. The sooner you make me aware of the situation, the more flexible I can be.

Make-up exams: Make up exams will be allowed only under justifiably extenuating circumstances. This includes travel for qualified athletic events, medical and family emergencies, bereavement, and so forth. You must notify me **before hand**, provide documentation if the situation warrants it, and schedule an alternative date for the exam.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Required readings: A number of reading will come from Bennett's "News: The Politics of Illusion" (9th edition). Other readings will come from online articles, books chapters and scholarly journals. Before reading any links from blackboard, you should note the dates they were published and who wrote/published them. Google these authors and organizations if you don't know them. This will get you into the habit of critically examining sources. It IS acceptable to use Wikipedia to look up these groups and authors but it is also important to go to their own websites and read other sources.

Weekly choice-readings: You are all citizens of some country, and insofar as you acknowledge your citizenship, then you have a duty to keep up on current affairs. For the purposes of our class, I expect you to keep up with what is going on in the world around you. From the following categories, you are expected to browse (reading is encouraged, but not expected) through at least three print and visual news sources. You may read/view more than one from a single category, but you must choose from not less than three categories.

These lists are far from exhaustive, so if you have any other sources in mind, please just run them past me after class, via email, or in office hours, etc.

Conservative

*Reason Online
Cato Institute
Fox News
Drudgereport.com
Overcoming Bias, Robin Hanson (blog)
Real Clear Politics
Hometown.org
Media Research Center*

Moderate

*PBS News Hour with Jim Lehrer
New York Times
Washington Post
Atlantic Monthly
Primetime news (CBS, ABC, or NBC, not local)
CNN
National Public Radio*

Liberal

*MSNBC
Commondreams.org
Huffingtonpost.com
Daily Show with John Stewart
Colbert Report with Steven Colbert
Media Matters for America
Democracy Now*

Foreign

*The Economist
London Financial Times
Japan Times
China Daily
BBC International
Al Jazeera
La Monde
Der Spiegel
Renmin Ribao
Tokyo Shimbun*

Miscellaneous (political interest only)

*Tabloid, entertainment
Adbusters
Guns and Ammo
Etne*

Graded Assignments:

Participation (10%): I will keep attendance for my reference, but you will not be penalized for absence. However, you must be in class to participate, and the more you attend and engage with the information, the better you will do on assignments and on the exams. Additionally, as I realize that not everyone is comfortable speaking in class, you may share your thoughts, raise questions, and share interesting media finds via Blackboard, or respond to those others have posted. In order to encourage this conversation, and for you to think about the material outside of class, you are required to **post at least one topic** on the discussion boards during this semester and **comment on two others** that someone else has posted. This will be incorporated into your participation.

Quizzes (10%): In order to encourage reading and attendance there will be *four pop quizzes* throughout the semester. These may be given at any time of class, but usually at the beginning or end. The date of each quiz will be random and the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. **Under no circumstances will missed quizzes be allowed to be made up,** so plan ahead. Some items on the quizzes will form the basis for questions on the exams.

Glossary: A “Glossary” will be worth 10% of your grade. This should be about 35-50 entries of words or phrases that you learned throughout the course that you find informative and interesting. It should be typed and should look like a glossary (Bolded word, colon, your definition). It's alright to use some bolded or italicized words from the Bennett book, but some should be drawn from lectures, discussions, ongoing news coverage, and other readings. The only rule here is that they must relate to either the media or politics and they must be “factual”. Most of them should be serious but humor is acceptable, as long as it's tasteful.

Response Papers (20%; 10% each): All students must write two response papers. This can be for any two of the starred readings on the syllabus. These response papers are due at the beginning of class on the day the readings are due. Each paper should be 2-3 pages double-spaced, 12pt Times or similar, and 1" margins. You may do two papers before Spring Break or one before the break and one after; you may not do two after spring break. A response paper can consist of anything- as long as it is a **critical reaction** to the assigned reading and not a summary of the reading or an informal political “rant”. Some ideas might include:

- Critiquing the article or study.
 - Where did the author go wrong? What did they miss? What could they elaborate on? Why? Or, do you agree with the reading? Why?
- What remaining questions do you have?
- How does the article relate to current events/the current political climate?
- What was the tone of the article and was it appropriate for the topic at hand?

You may also incorporate anything we learned in class (framing, information bias, ideological and partisan bias) into the response. This is encouraged but not necessary. The best response papers will be the ones that are insightful about the topic at hand, elaborate on them and/or make a larger, grander point. Please don't start your response halfway down the page.

Exams (25% and 25%): There will a midterm exam and a **cumulative** final exam that will lean more heavily on the material from the second part of class. These will be a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or short answer. Missed exams will be allowed to be made up on a case-by-case basis, but only with a legitimate reason, documentation, and grade penalty of at least one letter grade per late day. **In any circumstance other than a true emergency, you MUST let me know in advance.**

Extra credit (up to 5%): You will have two extra credit opportunities.

- Periodically, you will have an opportunity to participate in experiments being conducted by political scientists here at Stony Brook. I'll give you 1% bonus to your grade per experiment, and you may participate in up to two for credit.
- You may write another paper for extra credit. You must come up with your own idea (obviously, it must be related to this course), and we can discuss how many points it could potentially be worth—more challenging paper topics stand to earn more credit. You may turn in the paper any time before the final, but you *must* see me first to discuss your topic.

Grading:

	<i>Grading Scale</i>	
The grade breakdown will be as follows:	94+	A
	90-93	A-
10% --- Participation	87-89	B+
10% --- Glossary	84-86	B
10% --- Quizzes	80-83	B-
20% --- Reaction Papers (10% ea.)	77-79	C+
25% --- Midterm Exam	74-76	C
25% --- Final Exam	70-73	C-
	67-69	D+
	64-66	D
	60-63	D-
	0-59	F

The University Senate Undergraduate and Graduate Councils require the following required statements appear in all teaching syllabi (graduate and undergraduate courses) on the Stony Brook Campus:

Americans with Disabilities Act:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Academic Integrity:

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are **required** to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

Critical Incident Management:

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.

Note on the Syllabus:

The professor reserves the right to make reasonable changes to the syllabus and class/reading schedule during the course of the semester.

Preliminary Class Schedule and Readings

Note: This schedule may be subject to change

Introduction

Jan 27th: *Introduction and Class Format*

Part 1: The Media as Organizations The History and Function of the Media

Jan 29th: *History of the Media and Modes of Communication*

- ❖ Text: Bennett Preface
- ❖ Blackboard: On Bullshit by Harry Frankfurt

Feb 3rd: Stony Brook Closed for Winter Storm

Feb 5th: Stony Brook Closed for Winter Storm

Feb 10th: *Thinking About Media Messages: An Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking*

- ❖ Text: Bennett Chapter 1
- ❖ Blackboard: Green, "The Air America Plan"
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/04/the-air-america-plan/303834/>

Feb 12th: *Functions and Models of the Media**

- ❖ Blackboard: Cromwell, The Propaganda Model: An Overview
<http://www.chomsky.info/onchomsky/2002----.htm>
- ❖ Blackboard: Barsamian, "Collateral Damage"
<http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/200307--.htm>

Part 2: Inside the Profession

The Pieces and Parts of How the Media Works

Feb 17th: *Ownership, Regulation and Press Freedom*

- ❖ Blackboard: "Freedom of the Press"
- ❖ Link: Ingram, "Freedom of the Press Applies to Everyone-Yes, Even Bloggers"
<http://gigaom.com/2011/09/15/freedom-of-the-press-applies-to-everyone-yes-even-bloggers/>

Feb 19th: *Language and the Media**

- ❖ Blackboard: Lutz, "Political Case Studies" (Starts on pg. 193 of the PDF)
- ❖ Blackboard: Lakoff, "Metaphor and War" (Parts 1 and 2)
- ❖ Optional: Lakoff "Metaphor and War, Again"
http://www.alternet.org/story/15414/metaphor_and_war,_again

Feb 24th: *Inside the Profession: News Selection and Gatekeeping*

- ❖ Text: Bennett Chapter 6

- Feb 26th: *Informational Bias and Elite Bias**
- ❖ **Text: Bennett Chapter 2**
- Mar 3rd: *Ideological Bias Part I**
- ❖ **Blackboard: Chait, “The Vast Left Wing Conspiracy Is On Your Screen”**
<http://nymag.com/news/features/chait-liberal-movies-tv-2012-8/index2.html>
 - ❖ **Blackboard: How MSNBC Became Foxs’ Evil Twin:**
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/31/us/politics/msnbc-as-foxs-liberal-evil-twin.html?_r=0
 - ❖ **Blackboard (Video Parts 1, 2 and 3): John Stewart with Chris Wallace:**
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKLRmVYk0-s>
- Mar 5th: *Ideological Bias Part II and Political Punditry**
- ❖ **Blackboard: Cesca, “Exposing Glenn Beck”**
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-cesca/exposing-glenn-beck-as-a_b_528966.html
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Nolan, “Political Pundits are Mostly Worthless”**
<http://gawker.com/5955186/political-pundits-are-mostly-worthless>
- Mar 10th: *Framing, Agenda Setting and Priming**
- ❖ **Blackboard: Nelson, Clawson, Oxley, “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict”**
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Cox, “If the 1% Wants Class Warfare...”**
http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/18/tom-perkins-1-percent-class-warfare?CMP=ema_565
- Mar 12th: Midterm Exam

-----Spring break!!! (Mar 17th & Mar 19th)-----

Part 3: Media and the Political Process **How Media Interfaces with Process and Institutions**

- Mar 24th: *Interlude: Political Messages in Film*
- Mar 26th: *The Media and Campaigns**
- ❖ **Blackboard: Gerber, Chapter 8 “Elections in the Internet Age”**
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Peters, “Latest Word on the Trail: I Take It Back”**
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/16/us/politics/latest-word-on-the-campaign-trail-i-take-it-back.html>
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Farhi, “Off Target: Why is the Media Consensus So Often Wrong”**
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Rosenstiel, “How the Media Covered the 2012 Primary Campaign”**
http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/frames_campaign_coverage
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Winning the Media Campaign 2012:**
http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/winning_media_campaign_2012
- Mar 31st: *Political Advertisements**
- ❖ **Blackboard: Ansolabehere et al, “Do TV Attack Ads Subvert the Political Process?”**
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Amira, “The Unnecessary Lies of the Obama and Romney Campaigns”**
<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2012/08/unnecessary-lies-of-obama-and-romney.html>

Apr 2nd: *Institutions and the Media 1- The Presidency**
❖ **Blackboard:** McClellan, “Deniability” (*McClellan was G.W.Bush’s White House Press Secretary*)
❖ **Text:** Bennett pgs. 137-144

Apr 7th: *Institutions and the Media 2- Congress and the Supreme Court*
❖ **Blackboard:** Graber, Chapter on Congress and Supreme Court
❖ **Blackboard:** Sirota, “Congress: The Worst Reality Show TV Show Ever”
http://www.salon.com/2013/01/04/congress_worst_reality_tv_show_ever/

Part 4: News Coverage and Reception

How the Media Portrays the Events Happening Around Us

Apr 9th: *Citizens and the News**
❖ **Text:** Bennett, Chapter 3

Apr 14th: *Reporting Extraordinary Events**
❖ **Blackboard:** Sommers et al, “Race and Media Coverage of Hurricane Katrina: Analysis, Implications and Further Research Questions”

Apr 16th: *Muckraking and Mudslinging**
❖ **Blackboard:** Feldstein, “Watergate Revisited”
<http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=3735>
❖ **Blackboard:** Appuzo, Goldman, “With CIA Help, NYPD Moves Covertly In Muslim Areas”
<http://www.ap.org/Content/AP-In-The-News/2011/With-CIA-help-NYPD-moves-covertly-in-Muslim-areas>

Apr 21st: *Foreign Policy**
❖ **Blackboard:** Baum, “Soft News Goes to War”

Apr 23rd: *Case Study: Iraq War Coverage**
❖ **Blackboard:** McClellan, “Selling the War”

Part 5: Modern and Alternative Forms of Media

The Influence of Media in a World of Changing Technology

Apr 28th: *Propaganda*
❖ **Blackboard:** Doob - Goebbels’ Principles of Propaganda

Apr 30th: *Music and Politics*
❖ **Blackboard:** Pedelty & Keefe, “Political Pop, Political Fans?”
<http://www.music.ucsb.edu/projects/musicandpolitics/archive/2010-1/pedelty-keefe.html>
❖ **Blackboard:** Fisher – Gangnam Style Dissected
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/08/gangnam-style-dissected-the-subversive-message-within-south-koreas-music-video-sensation/261462/#>

- May 5th: *Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and Other Social Media**
- ❖ **Blackboard: Rosen, “The Legend of Trent Lott and the Weblogs”**
http://archive.pressthink.org/2004/03/15/lott_case.html
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Williams, “How the Internet Changed Komen’s Mind”**
http://www.salon.com/2012/02/03/how_the_internet_changed_komens_mind/
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Grossman, “Iran Protests: Twitter, the Medium of the Movement”**
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1905125,00.html>
 - ❖ **Blackboard: Weaver, “Iran’s Twitter Revolution Was Exaggerated”**
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/09/iran-twitter-revolution-protests>

- May 7th: *Political Cartoons/Political Comedy and End of Class Wrap-Up*
- **GLOSSARY ASSIGNMENT IS DUE TODAY****
- ❖ **Blackboard: Moore and Ambah, “Tensions Rise over Cartoons of Muhammad”**
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/02/AR2006020202720.html>
 - ❖ **Blackboard: JC Baumgartner, “The Fey Effect: Young Adults, Political Humor and Perceptions of Sarah Palin in the 2008 Presidential Election**

Final Exam: Tuesday May 13th, 5:30-8PM