Description of Course

The mass media's power in American politics has been one of the most debated topics in political discussion. This course is an effort to systematically analyze the media's relationship with political institutions and organizations, policies, and the public.

In this course, we will analyze the basis for the media's power. We will discuss the historical relationship between the press and political institutions and processes, the news gathering process, the role of the news media in electoral campaigns, the legislative process, presidential decision making, and judicial behavior.

By the conclusion of this course, you should understand how the media's role in politics has evolved historically, what criteria the press uses for newsworthiness and how others attempt to use that criteria for their political ends, how the media in the United States compare with other nations, and to what extent the news media intersect with various aspects of American politics - campaigns and elections, the policymaking process, formation of political attitudes.

Instructor Expectations

1. Enrollment in this class implies a willingness to invest the effort needed to learn the subject and do well in the course.
2. Frequent usage will be made of the opportunity to interact with the professor in order to discuss research paper subjects, assignments, or the class topics generally.
3. Assignments must be completed on time. One letter grade is subtracted from the grade for each day late. No work will be accepted after the beginning of the final exam period.
4. Students will be expected to participate fully in the class discussion. That requires prior study of the assigned readings for the day.

Course Requirements

1. A term research paper of 15-20 pages on a topic of your choosing, but approved by the professor in advance.(20 percent)
A three-page prospectus with a bibliography (at least 15 relevant academic sources) is due by January 26 in class. One page should be a description of the paper. The second page should be an outline for the paper. The third page should include the bibliography. Do not count Internet sources or popular sources as one of your 15 relevant academic sources. They must be scholarly books or journal articles.

The final paper will be due March 22 by 5 p.m.
The research paper should be an exhaustive undergraduate treatment of a topic related to the role of the media in American politics. The paper should prove a thesis or answer an empirical question. The thesis or question will be of your choosing and the process of choosing is critical to the development of analytical skills. Make sure the thesis or question is narrow enough to address in a paper of this length.

Some examples of theses:

*Social media have caused greater inactivity between candidates and voters during electoral campaigns.*

*Exposure to a political talk radio program causes individual attitude change in the direction of the host’s ideological views.*

Empirical Questions:

*How did journalists gain independence from politicians in the early 1800s?*

*How do the political attitudes of news media professionals differ from those of the general public?*

If you decide to change the topic, alert me no later than March 2. Following that date, your chosen topic will be the topic of your paper. Do your research early in order to assure that you are not caught at the end with an unmanageable paper. This paper must be unique to this class, unless approved by the instructor in advance.

Some hints about grading:

1. The minimum page length is mandatory. I will not even read a paper of less than 15 pages. It will be returned with a grade of zero.

2. Please thoroughly proofread your written work. Spell checkers and grammatical programs make this task easy. There is no excuse for these mistakes. If there are more than three mistakes of this character on a page, I will reduce the grade by one half letter grade (for example, A to A-) for each page.

3. Any information used from other sources must be fully cited, not just direct quotations. The paper should draw on at least 20 relevant academic sources. Again, these must be scholarly journal articles and books. In addition to that number, you may
include other sources such as interviews, public opinion surveys, speeches, Congressional reports, etc. Popular sources such as newsmagazines and newspapers should be used only when no better source is available (for example to cite some very recent event). Avoid Internet sites, particularly wikipedia.

2. Two midterm examinations - (20 percent each)

3. A final examination (20 percent)

4. Debate (10 percent)
   Topics:
   * Online Political Discussion Degrades Political Discourse in the United States
   * News Cannot be Reported Objectively by Journalists
   * The Private Lives of Public Officials or Candidates Should Not Be Reported by the Press Unless That Behavior is Illegal
   * News Media Organizations Should be Prohibited from Broadcasting Election Night Results Before Polls are Closed in the Continental United States
   * News Media Organizations Should be Prohibited from Publicizing Classified Government Documents During Wartime, News Media Coverage of U.S. Military or Foreign Policy Decisions or Actions Should Be Subject to Government Censorship

5. Class Participation (10 percent)

**Required Texts**


**Readings and Discussion Topics**

January 5 – Introduction; The Communications Revolution
January 10 – Historical Development – Online Readings, pp. 25-63, 64-86
January 12 – Global Perspective – Online Readings, pp. 87-96
January 19 - Regulating the Press – Graber, ch. 2,3
January 24 - The Media Culture – Online Readings, pp. 111-120
January 26 - New Media – Rozell, ch 13
January 31 - Debate: *Online Political Discussion Degrades Political Discourse in the United States*
February 2 – **First Midterm Exam**
February 7 – Newsgathering– Graber, ch. 4
February 9 - Newsmaking – Graber, ch. 5
February 14 - Debate: *News Cannot be Reported Objectively by Journalists*
February 16 – Effects on the Media Audience – Graber, ch. 7; Rozell, ch. 12
February 22 - Media and Electoral Roles – Rozell, ch. 10
February 23 – Debate: The Private Lives of Public Officials or Candidates Should Not Be Reported by the Press Unless that Behavior is Illegal
February 28 – Media and Political Campaigns – Graber, ch. 8; Rozell, chs 7 and 8
March 2 - Second Midterm Exam
March 7 – Debate: News Media Organizations Should be Prohibited from Broadcasting Election Night Results Before Polls are Closed in the Continental United States
March 9 - The Presidency and the Press - Graber, ch. 9; Rozell, ch. 1
March 14 - Covering Congress – Graber, ch. 9; Rozell, ch. 2
March 16 - The Supreme Court in the News – Graber, ch. 10; Rozell, chs 3 and 4
March 21 - Bureaucratic News - Rozell chp. 5
March 23 – Debate: News Media Organizations Should be Prohibited from Publicizing Classified Government Documents
March 28 - Getting Publicity: Interest Groups - Rozell, chp. 9
March 30 - The Policy Role of the Press – Graber, ch. 6
April 4 - Foreign Affairs Coverage –Graber, ch. 11; Rozell, ch 11
April 6 – National Security Policy Coverage – Graber, ch. 11; Rozell, ch 11
April 11 – Debate: During Wartime, News Media Coverage of U.S. Military or Foreign Policy Decisions or Actions Should Be Subject to Government Censorship
April 13 - Conclusion
April 20 – 8 AM – Final Exam
April 29 - Historical Development: The 1700 and 1800s – Online readings, pp. 25-63; Historical Development: The 1900s – Online readings, pp. 64-86
May 4 - Global Perspective – Online readings, pp. 87-96; Regulating the Press – Graber, ch. 2, 3; The Media Culture – online readings, pp. 111-120.

**May 6 - PROSPECTUS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

May 6 – New Media - Rozell, ch. 13; Debate: *Online Political Discussion Degrades Political Discourse in the United States*

May 11 – **First Midterm Exam**

May 13 – Newsgathering and Newsmaking – Graber, ch. 4, 5; Debate: *The News Cannot be Reported by Journalists Objectively*

May 18 - Effects on the Media Audience – Graber, ch. 7; Rozell, ch. 12; Media and Electoral Roles - Rozell, chp. 10

May 20 - Media and Political Campaigns – Graber, ch. 8; Rozell, chs 7 and 8; Debate: *The Private Lives of Public Officials or Candidates Should Not Be Reported by the Press Unless That Behavior is Illegal*

May 25 - The Presidency and the Press – Graber, ch. 9; Rozell, ch. 1; Covering Congress – Graber, ch. 9; Rozell, ch. 2

May 27 - **Second Midterm Exam**

June 1 - The Supreme Court in the News – Graber, ch. 10; Rozell, chs 3 and 4; Bureaucratic News - Rozell chp. 5

June 3 - Getting Publicity: Interest Groups - Rozell, chp. 9; The Policy Role of the Press – Graber, ch. 6

June 8 - Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy Coverage – Graber, ch. 11; Rozell, chp. 11; Debate: *During Wartime, News Media Coverage of U.S. Military or Foreign Policy Decisions or Actions Should Be Subject to Government Censorship*

June 10 – Conclusion

June 16-17 – **Final Exam** 5

January 4 - Introduction

January 6 - The Communications Revolution - PAP, Introduction and chapter 1

January 11 - Historical Development: The 1700 and 1800s - PAP, Chapter 2

January 13 - Historical Development: The 1900s - PAP, Chapter 3

January 18 - Global Perspective - PAP, chp. 4

January 20 - Regulating the Press - PAP, chp. 5

**JANUARY 25 - PROSPECTUS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

January 25 - **First Midterm Exam**
January 27 - The Media Culture - PAP, chp. 6

February 1 - New Media - PAP, ch. 7; Rozell, chp. 13

February 3 - Newsgathering - PAP, chp. 8

February 8 - Newsmaking - PAP, chp. 9

February 10, 15 - Effects on the Media Audience - PAP, chp. 10; Rozell, chp. 12

February 17, 24 - Media and Electoral Roles - PAP, chp. 11, Rozell, chp. 10

February 22 - NO CLASS; MONDAY CLASSES

March 1 - **Second Midterm Exam**

March 3, 8 - Media and Political Campaigns - PAP, chp. 12; Rozell, chps 7 and 8

March 10, 15 - The Presidency and the Press - PAP, chp. 13; Rozell, chp. 1

March 17 - Covering Congress - PAP, chp. 14; Rozell, chapter 2

**March 21- TERM PAPER SUBMISSIONS DUE BY 5 P.M.**

March 22 - The Supreme Court in the News - PAP, chp. 15; Rozell, chapters 3 and 4

March 24 - **Third Midterm Exam**

March 29 - Bureaucratic News - PAP, chp. 16; Rozell chp. 5

March 31 - Getting Publicity: Interest Groups - PAP, chp. 17; Rozell, chp. 9

April 5 - The Policy Role of the Press - PAP, chp. 18

April 7, 12 - Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy Coverage - PAP, chp. 19; Rozell, chp. 11

April 15 - Conclusion - PAP, Conclusion

**Final Exam** Wednesday, April 20 - 11:00 a.m.