

**Politics 353—Media and Politics**  
**Cornell College**  
**Block 4 (2018 – 2019)**

**Instructor**

Dr. Chris Kromphardt  
email: ckromphardt@cornellcollege.edu  
office: South Hall 304  
office hours: 2:30 – at least 3:00 p.m., or by email appointment

**Room and Meeting Times**

South Hall 300  
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (MWF)  
9:30 – 11:00 a.m.; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (TuTh)

**Course Description, Learning Outcomes, and Educational Priorities and Objectives**

The catalog's description for POL 353 is as follows: "The role and impact of the news media within American politics. Explores the production, presentation, and consumption of political news, in addition to contemporary controversies." The news media's roles in disseminating and interpreting information place it in a politically powerful position. The marketplace of ideas that fuels the American republic would be impoverished were the news media less prominent. Yet forces of technological innovation, media fragmentation, and political polarization have weakened the gains that resulted from the media's increased professionalization.

Students in this course will utilize the tools of social-scientific inquiry as they think critically about positive questions relating to the news media's role and influence in American politics and normative implications of the evidence. Students who successfully complete the coursework for POL 353 will achieve the following learning outcomes:

- Can describe the news media as a complex entity consisting of varying outlets by ownership, constituency, resources, and objectives.
- Can relate journalistic outputs to economic, political, and legal constraints through the incentives imposed on a variety of actors, including journalists, citizens, and politicians.
- Can evaluate the performance and influence of the news media according to broader democratic principles.
- Can model an empirical approach to analyzing evidence about political phenomena through oral and written communication.

This course meets the Knowledge Educational Priority and Objective (EPO) by integrating and applying knowledge from a focused area of study, that of the role of the news media in American politics, and by broadening knowledge for general education in other courses, especially the social sciences. It meets the Inquiry and Reasoning EPOs by modeling best social-science practices for evaluating and reasoning about contemporary questions from evidence. Finally, it meets the Communication and Citizenship EPOs through its emphasis on class discussion and group collaboration.

**Politics 353—Media and Politics**  
**Cornell College**  
**Block 4 (2018 – 2019)**

**Prerequisites**

None.

**Readings and Resources**

Students should stay abreast of current events, which will often provide fodder for discussion and further application of course material. I recommend seeking out news from a variety of sources, including those that you may not consult otherwise. We will discuss good practices for being a discerning consumer of information.

*Moodle*

I post course materials on Moodle, including the syllabus, assignments, and presentations (after they have been given in class).

*Required texts*

Graber, Doris A, ed. 2011. *Media Power in Politics*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington D.C.: Sage/CQ Press.

Graber, Doris A. and Johanna Dunaway. 2018. *Mass Media and American Politics*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington D.C.: Sage/CQ Press.

**Grading and Graded Material**

*Grading scale*

All assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale. Letter grades will be assessed on the following scale: A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (63-66); D- (60-62); F (59 and below).

*Participation*

Participation consists of attending class and asking and answering questions. I will keep a daily tally of participation, with a maximum of three points available per day. Students who earn 30 participation points will receive full credit; partial credit will be awarded as a proportion of participation points earned. Participation is worth 12.5% of the block grade.

*Discussion Leadership*

Students will serve two turns as discussion leaders for scholarly articles listed on the calendar during Weeks 2 and 3. Discussion leaders are required to email the instructor at least two open-ended questions before the beginning of class that they are prepared to pose to their classmates in order to stimulate substantive conversation. Each turn as leader is worth 2.5% of the block grade. Note: Leader assignments will be made by the end of Week 1.

**Politics 353—Media and Politics**  
**Cornell College**  
**Block 4 (2018 – 2019)**

*Article critique*

Students will summarize key components of a recent scholarly article on media effects and develop an empirical critique of its research design and conclusion. I will assign the article to be summarized and critiqued by Day 3, although students wishing to write about an alternative article of their choosing have the option to petition the instructor no later than Day 5. The paper is due in hard-copy form at noon on Day 6. The critique is worth 10% of the block grade.

*Research design*

Students will submit a paper and give a presentation in which they outline a plan for conducting an empirical study of media effects, including presenting a causal question, reviewing literature, and identifying an appropriate data source for testing a theoretically driven hypothesis. The paper is due in hard-copy form at noon on Day 18. Presentations summarizing key components of the research design will be given in class on Day 18. The research design is worth 20% and the presentation is worth 2.5% of the block grade.

*Simulations*

Simulation enables students to learn about processes by assuming roles and making decisions that take into account incentives that accord to those roles. To learn about a variety of processes relevant to Supreme Court decision making, students will simulate the experience of clerking for a justice in real-life cases involving the news media.

Each student will be assigned a set of attributes (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, law school, geography, religion) composing a biographical profile. On Days 5 and 10, each student will take part in a simulated discussion involving an actual Supreme Court case that has already been decided. The discussion will occur among a random assignment of students playing their roles and the instructor playing the role of a specific Supreme Court justice who wrote an opinion in the given case.

Students must bring hard-copy biographical essays of their clerks to class the morning that the simulation will be held. These essays must summarize each student's assigned profile and include detailed justification about how all attributes might shape attitudes toward the issues involved in the case and influence positions on key disputes and preferred outcomes. Students assigned to the same justice will meet during class time. On the basis of the biographies, students will form alliances based on shared positions about their preferred outcomes and rationales. At least two alliances must be formed among each justice's clerks. Each alliance will prepare an oral presentation to be given in class in which each clerk gives an approximately 1.5-minute summary of his or her preferred outcome and rationale for this position.

Students will be graded individually based upon the submitted biography and performance during oral presentations. Each simulation is worth 7.5% of the block grade.

**Politics 353—Media and Politics**  
**Cornell College**  
**Block 4 (2018 – 2019)**

*Exams*

There are three closed-book exams containing multiple-choice and short-answer questions. An exhaustive list of potential short-answer questions will be distributed before each exam, and class time will be allocated to fielding questions. Exams will be worth 15% (student's highest scoring exam) and 10% (student's two lowest scoring exams) of the block grade.

**Policies**

*Cell phones and laptops*

Use of cell phones in the classroom is strictly prohibited. Violation of this policy will result in loss of participation points for the day. Use of laptops is permitted only for looking up information that pertains to class discussion, and may not be used as a tool for taking notes.

*Academic Honesty*

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

*Disabilities*

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>

*Other Accommodations*

If you have any other needs for accommodation, please let me know and we can make necessary arrangements.

**Politics 353—Media and Politics**  
**Cornell College**  
**Block 4 (2018 – 2019)**

**Calendar**

Day 1

- Introductions; Course Preliminaries; Game; Watch *Good Night and Good Luck*; Discuss Fine, “‘See it Now’ in Lurid Black and White”

Day 2—Media Roles

- Discuss Ch. 1 in Graber and Dunaway; Discuss Ch. 1 in Graber

Day 3—Media Ownership and Government Regulation

- Discuss Ch. 2 in Graber and Dunaway; Discuss Ch. 4 in Graber

Day 4—Freedom of the Press

- Discuss Ch. 3 in Graber and Dunaway; Discuss Ch. 34 in Graber

Day 5—Simulation #1

- Simulate *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* (1988)

Day 6—The Federal Communications Commission

- Discuss Ch. 32 in Graber

Day 7—Exam #1

Day 8—The News Media as Policymakers

- Discuss Ch. 6 in Graber and Dunaway; Discuss Ch. 27 in Graber

Day 9—The Media and the President

- Discuss Ch. 7 in Graber and Dunaway; Discuss Ch. 16 in Graber

Day 10—Simulation #2

- Simulate *New York Times v. United States* (1971); Watch *The Post*

Day 11—The Media and Congress

- Discuss Ch. 8 in Graber and Dunaway (through p. 268); Discuss Ch. 21 in Graber

Day 12—The Media and the Justice System

- Discuss Ch. 8 in Graber and Dunaway (through rest of chapter); Discuss Ch. 10 in Graber

Day 13—Exam #2

Day 14—Media Effects on Citizen Attitudes

- Discuss Ch. 11 in Graber and Dunaway; Discuss Ch. 2 in Graber

Day 15—The Media and Elections

- Discuss Ch. 12 in Graber and Dunaway; Discuss Chs. 13, 15 in Graber

**Politics 353—Media and Politics**  
**Cornell College**  
**Block 4 (2018 – 2019)**

Day 16—Media Bias and Fake News

- Discuss Ch. 13 in Graber and Dunaway; Discuss Lazer et al. 2018. “The Science of Fake News.” *Science* 359: 1094-1096.

Day 17—Exam #3

Day 18—Research Design Presentations