Overview

Politics of the Media (PAIR2023 & PAIR3032)
Lecturer: Justin Murphy
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Office: Building 58, Room 3083
Lecture: Thursday 10am - 12pm
Tutorial: Thursday 5pm - 6pm
Contact and feedback hours:
Monday 2pm - 4pm
Friday 2pm - 4pm

> "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society." - Edward Bernays, 1928
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> "…we called for the creation of a network of independent media, a network of information. We mean a network to resist the power of the lie that sells us this war that we call the Fourth World War. We need this network not only as a tool for our social movements, but for our lives: this is a project of life, of humanity, humanity which has a right to critical and truthful information." - Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, 1997

This course provides a theoretical and empirical overview of the role played by information, communication, and

media within the politics of the modern state. Students are introduced to canonical as well as marginal and emerging perspectives on media politics and asked to weigh them against the historical record. Course materials are in a wide variety of media. All of the materials are digital and freely available through links on the course website.

Each week will be devoted to a theme. Typically, each week's materials have been curated to expose the student to the dominant theoretical perspective, a dissident or heterodox perspective, and something empirical (qualitative or quantitative) to help fix ideas. The balance of these materials will be variable and depend on the nature of theme.

Summary of teaching and learning strategies

Focused, directed readings which students complete before each session will provide the core material around which each session is organized. Each session will include a lecture providing a general overview of the main points which will be followed by discussion questions in response to which students will exercise their command of the material. These teaching and learning methods will achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the module by providing a focused, consistent, and supportive environment where students engage with the material in multiple ways (through reading, audible/visual lectures, and through their own speaking).

Aims and objectives

- Students will gain an independent and critical command of the essential questions in media politics. They will learn to engage with historical texts, theoretical texts, contemporary academic research, as well as cutting-edge contemporary discussions of media politics on the internet. In other words, students will acquire the theoretical tools required of any global citizen who would seek to produce new knowledge in the state-of-the-art of media politics.

- Students will be able to apply their knowledge to diverse real-world issues, questions, and historical trends. - Students will improve their ability to develop original research questions and write formal academic research papers.

- Students will develop the oral and verbal skills necessary to communicate their ideas effectively to a wide range of audiences. In particular, through their engagement with contemporary theorists and practitioners of media politics online, students will learn the skills and norms required to become active and networked participants in both theoretical discussions and on-the-ground developments in media politics.

What students will gain from this module

Having successfully completed the module, students will:

- Have a considered, critical, independent perspective on the role of media in the politics across contemporary states.

- Be able to speak, write, and disseminate online their independent perspectives on the main questions and issues in the politics of media.

- Have a basic working knowledge of today's incipient trends and questions in the politics of media, and their

institutional landscape.

- Have a more reflexive awareness of how the politics of media shape their own perceptions and behaviors.

Assessment

Students will submit a mid-term essay (minimum of 1500 words) worth 30% of the course grade (due at 3:00pm on November 10th). Students will also submit an end-of-term essay (minimum of 3000 words) worth 60% of the course grade (due at 3:00pm on January 9th). Also, an internet-based political communications practicum, used throughout the semester, will be worth 10% of the course grade.

Students should note they are permitted to use their 1,500-word essay in the 3,000 word essay, but with the expectation that they will significantly revise and improve the first 1,500 words based on the feedback they receive. Additionally, students can also use blog posts they write throughout the semester for the practicum in their 3,000 word essay. However, the final 3,000 word essay will be a proper piece of research judged seriously with respect to all aspects of good academic writing, so students should not think they can merely copy and paste their writings from throughout the semester into a 3,000-word hodge-podge! This feature of the assessment is to show how consistent thinking and writing and blogging throughout a semester can and should make serious research easier; it does not make lazy research any harder to detect, and neither does it make lazy research better.

Re-sits

The student will re-write both essays following the same instructions as found on the module handbook but the word counts will be a maximum of 2000 words for the first essay and 2500 words for the second essay, and with two additional exceptions. As stated in the module handbook, the student is free to design their own essay questions so long as it pertains to the course material and the answer uses material and knowledge gained through the module. However, whereas the handbook states students may pursue the same question in both assessments to improve their first effort, students re-sitting this module must ask and answer different questions for each essay given that they will be doing them at the same time. Also, if a student re-sitting prefers to have a question prompts, the convenor will gladly provide one optional prompt per question to any students re-sitting the module.

Schedule

Week 1. Introduction

Introductions.

Week 2. Internet practicum

- *You're not surfing the net, you're drowning in it! A university practicum for the internet life*, January 2014, Justin Murphy.

A Conversation with the Man Who Tweets Revolutions. February 1, 2013. Andy Carvin and Brooke Gladstone, On The Media podcast.

Week 3. The beginnings of the mass media

- Chomsky, Noam. 1991. *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*. New York: Seven Stories Press. Pages 1–30 of the PDF.

- Bernays, Edward L. 1928/2004. *Propaganda*. Ig Publishing. Pages 1–40 of the PDF.

- Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. Harcourt, Brace and Company. Pages 1–26 of the PDF.

Week 4. Early social science of the media

- McLuhan, Marshall. 1964/1994. Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Read pages 1–8.

- Wiener, Norbert. 1950/1989. *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society*. London: Free Association Books. Read the introduction (pp. 11–28 of the PDF, xi-xxiii of the book).

- "*The Medium is the Message* at 50", *On the Media* podcast, October 17, 2014. 7:53 minutes.

Further readings (not required):

- "McLuhanisms 50 years later", Interview with Nicholas Carr on McLuhan. *On the Media* podcast, October 17, 2014. 7:53 minutes.

- *The Medium is the Message*, lecture by Marshall Mcluhan, 1979, 14 min.

- Ellul, Jacques. 1965. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. New York: Knopf.

- Deutsch, Karl W. 1966. *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*.

- Deutsch, Karl W. 1953. *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry Into the Foundations of Nationality*. New York: Technology Press.

Week 5. The rise of an institutionalized mainstream in the social science of the media

- Klapper, Joseph T. 1957. "What We Know About the Effects of Mass Communication: the Brink of Hope." Public Opinion Quarterly 21(4): 453–74.

- Zaller, John R. 1992. The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Pooley, Jefferson. 2006. "Fifteen Pages That Shook the Field: Personal Influence, Edward Shils, and the Remembered History of Mass Communication Research." The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 608(1): 130–56.

Further readings (not required)

- Katz, Elihu, and Paul F Lazarsfeld. 1955/2009. Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications. Collier-Macmillan.

- Campbell, Angus, Philip E Converse, Warren E Miller, and Donald E Stokes. 1960/1980. The American Voter. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In Ideology and Its Discontents, ed. David E Apter. New York: The New Press of Glencoe.

- Gitlin, Todd. 1978. "Media Sociology." Theory and Society 6(2): 205–53.

Week 6. Do the mass media enforce government transparency and accountability?

- Brunetti, Aymo, and Beatrice Weder. 2003. "A Free Press Is Bad News for Corruption." Journal of Public Economics 87: 1801–24.

- Feldstein, Mark. 2004. "Watergate Revisited." *American Journalism Review*.

Further readings (not required)

- Slantchev, Branislvav L. 2006. "Politicians, the Media, and Domestic Audience Costs." *International Studies Quarterly* 50(2): 445–77.

CHOI, SEUNG-WHAN, and Patrick James. 2006. "Media Openness, Democracy and Militarized Interstate Disputes." British Journal of Political Science 37(01): 23.

Snyder, James M Jr, and David Strömberg. 2012. "Press Coverage and Political Accountability." Journal of Political Economy: 1–47.

Week 7. Or are the mass media propaganda machines?

- Herman, Edward S, and Noam Chomsky. 1988. *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media.* New York: Pantheon.

- Kern, H L, and J Hainmueller. 2009. "Opium for the Masses: How Foreign Media Can Stabilize Authoritarian

Regimes." *Political Analysis* 17(4): 377–99.

- Barabas, Jason. 2011. "Public Opinion, the Media, and Economic Well-Being." In *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media.* Shapiro, Robert Y, and Lawrence R Jacobs, eds. Oxford.

Week 8. Are the mass media shaped by political institutions?

- Bennett, W Lance. 1990. "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States." International Studies Quarterly 40(2): 103–27.

- Baek, Mijeong. 2009. "A Comparative Analysis of Political Communication Systems and Voter Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science*: 1–19.

- Baum, Matthew A. 2012. "The Iraq Coalition of the Willing and (Politically) Able: Party Systems, the Press, and Public Influence on Foreign Policy." American Journal of Political Science 57(2): 442–58.

- *And I'm Not Going to Take it Anymore*, Andrea Seabrook interviewed by Bob Garfield, On The Media podcast. August 24, 2012.

- *Frustration in the White House Press Corps*, December 13, 2013. Bob Garfield, On The Media podcast.

Week 9. Are the mass media shaped by economic institutions?

- Petrova, Maria. 2008. "Inequality and Media Capture." Journal of Public Economics 92(1–2): 183–212.

- Prior, Markus. 2005. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 577–92.

- Aalberg, Toril, Peter van Aelst, and James Curran. 2010. "Media Systems and the Political Information Environment: a Cross-National Comparison." International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society 15(3): 255–71.

Eisensee, Thomas, and David Strömberg. 2007. "News Droughts, News Floods, and U.S. Disaster Relief." The Quarterly Journal of Economics: 1–36.

Additional readings:

Prior, M. 2013. "Media and Political Polarization." Annual Review of Political Science.

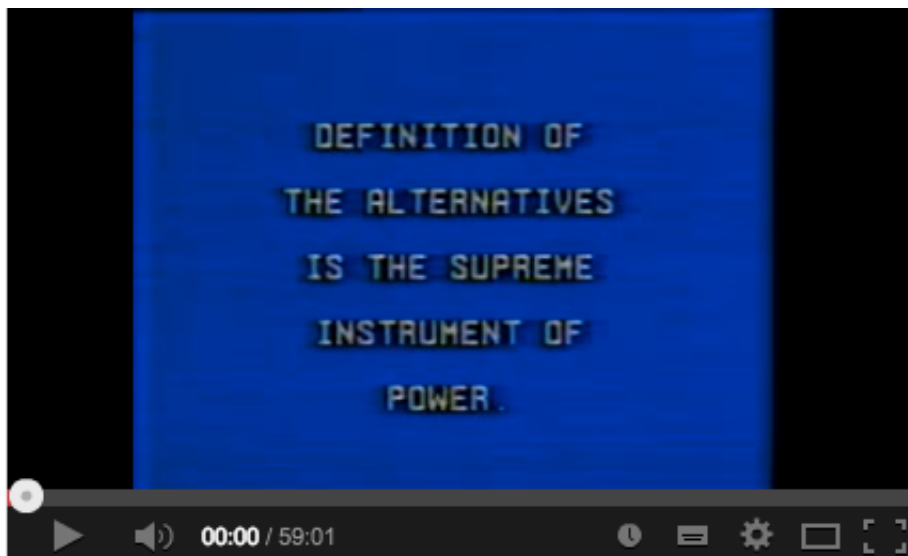**Week 10. How do the mass media represent different groups?**

"Willie Horton" ad, George H.W. Bush, 1988, 30 sec.

"White Hands" ad, Jesse Helms, 1990, 30 sec.

Racism on TV in Great Britain with Stuart Hall, 1984, 60 min.

"From Feminism to Patriarchy" in *Cultural Criticism and Transformation*, with bell hooks, Media Education Foundation, 1997, 6 min.

Media Coverage of the 2011 London Riots, a multimedia collection

Additional reading:

Full transcript of the video *Cultural Criticism and Transformation* featuring bell hooks, Media Education Foundation, 1997

"Jesse Helms, John McCain and the Mark of the White Hands", John Nichols, *The Nation*, 2008

Week 11. Do the internet and social media lead to revolution against authoritarian regimes?

Statement of Subcomandante Marcos to the NYC Freeing the Media Teach-In, Subcomandante Marcos of the EZLN, 1997, 9:25 min.

"Digital Zapatismo" featuring Electronic Disturbance Theatre, from *The Hacktivists*, 1997, 9:25 min.

- Safranek, Rita. "The Emerging Role of Social Media in Political and Regime Change." ProQuest Discovery Guides.

- Tunisia's Twitter Revolution, Marc Lynch interviewed by Brooke Gladstone, On The Media Podcast, January 21, 2011.

Week 12. Or do all media just make states stronger and more oppressive?

MacKinnon, Rebecca. 2011. "China's 'Networked Authoritarianism.'" *Journal of Democracy* 22(2): 32–46.

Hassanpour, N., 2014. Media Disruption and Revolutionary Unrest: Evidence From Mubarak's Quasi-Experiment. Political Communication, 31(1), pp.1–24.

Barberá, P., How Social Media Reduces Mass Political Polarization: Evidence from Germany, Spain, and the U.S. Unpublished Manuscript.

Morozov, E., 2011. The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom, New York: Public Affairs.