

GOVERNMENT 370L:**THE NEWS MEDIA AS A POLITICAL INSTITUTION
Fall 2021**

Class Meeting: MW 2:30pm-4:00pm, GDC 4.302
Unique No.: 38955
Instructor: Bartholomew H. Sparrow
Professor of Government
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Office Hours: M: 4:00-5:00pm, TH: 1:30-3:30pm, or by appt.

Course Description

“The News Media as a Political Institution” examines the roles the media play in the U.S. political system. In an overview of the interaction of the print, video, and social media with politics, government, and the public, the course explains why Americans get the political news they do. It investigates the systematic factors involved in the production of the news and how the media, including the social media, came to where it is today.

Texts:

- A required course packet (under the class name and the instructor’s name) is available at Jenn’s (2518 Guadalupe).
- All other materials will be posted on Canvas or are available online (***) at the PCL.
- Course readings, lectures, and in-class discussions are supplemented by two films: *All the President’s Men* and *The Post* (both to be watched outside of class).

Grades:

- Quizzes, 4 in all (8% each, students may discard lowest grade), or 24% of total.
- Final take-home (16%). Take-home final is to be handed out last day of class. **N.B.:** there are no make-up tests and the final must be submitted on time; late copies and emailed copies will not be accepted.
- A media log (48 hrs.) and an analytic essay based on that log, max 1,500 wds (7% and 8% respectively); 15% total.
- A short independent research paper (2,000-2,500 wds.) with a topic assigned to you by the instructor, where you will have a choice of topics to choose from (20%). With your instructor’s permission, you may also pick your own topic.
- Class presentations by the two “students of the day”: a quotation and a question from that day’s reading, each student has two (2) over the course of the semester (5% total).
- Questions posted on Canvas under “Discussion” for the date of that day’s class, twelve (12) over the semester. All days are eligible except your own presentation days and days with no assigned texts (tests, etc.). (5% total).
- Class participation (15%): this grade includes participation in class (quality and quantity); attendance; 3 tardies count as 1 absence, 4 or more absences result in each additional absence after 4 being penalized by one point off the participation grade.

Summary: quizzes and test (40%); media log and paper (15%); research paper (20%); class presentations (5%); questions (5%); class participation (15%).

Expectations

As a student in the class, you are expected to demonstrate the following:

- intellectual engagement in the texts and topics of the course
 - honesty, responsibility, self-motivation, and hard work
 - self-reflection and on-going assessment of your own learning: your instructor is available during office hours, and by appointment if you are unable to make office hours. He is also usually available a few minutes before and after class.
 - respect for your fellow students and the teacher.
 - reading the day's assigned text *before* class and attending class.
 - keeping up with the course's Canvas site and your own email (email constitutes official UT correspondence)
 - formatting your emails as business correspondence (with a title/greeting and signature).
- N.B.: I shall try to get to you emails within 24 hours—typically much sooner—unless I am indisposed. I may also respond to the class via Canvas should you voice a general concern where I believe it would be useful to share my response with the entire class.

Other Rules

- Computers, mobile 'phones, and other electronic devices need to be turned off unless with the express permission of your instructor: *using devices in class counts as a tardy, and after the third violation it will count as an absence from class and the student may be asked to leave.*
- Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/> Please inform the instructor of your condition by the 2nd week of classes.
- Special arrangements for the assignments may be considered on an individual basis in exceptional circumstances, but only if you discuss this with the instructor in advance.
- By UT Austin policy, you must notify your instructor of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Covid-19

Lastly, getting vaccinated and being masked is **strongly recommended** for the 2021-2022 academic year. Many members of the UT community live with immunocompromised, elderly, and/or family members under the age of 12 who are particularly at risk and may not be able to be vaccinated. Getting vaccinated and wearing a mask are important not only for your own health, then, but also the health of many others.

THE NEWS MEDIA AS A POLITICAL INSTITUTION
COURSE SCHEDULE
Spring 2020, Professor Sparrow

Introduction: The Media and Political Reality

- Aug. 25: The Media as a Political Institution
Introduction; review of syllabus.
- Aug. 30: Polarization
• Cass R. Sunstein, *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media* Princeton University Press, 2018, Ch. 3, pp. 59-97.***
- Sept. 1: The Protest Machine
• Siva Vaidhyanathan, *Anti-Social Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2018, Chs. 5, pp. 128-145.
- Sept. 6: Labor Day Holiday; no class
- Sept. 8: Political Suasion and Disinformation
• Vaidhyanathan, *Anti-Social Media*, Chs. 6 and 7, pp. 146-195.
- Sept., 13 Media Failure
• Steven Kull, Clay Ramsay, and Evan Lewis, "Misperceptions, the Media, and the Iraq War," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2019): 221-34.
- Sept. 15: Watergate
• Watch *All the President's Men* (YouTube).
• Mark Feldstein, "Watergate Revisited," *American Journalism Review*, Aug/Sept 2004, 60-68; see background: <https://www.thejournal.ie/what-was-watergate-14-facts-richard-nixon-494970-Jun2012/>
- Part II: The Institutional Media**
- Sept. 20: Preface: The Regulation of the Media
• Dana Van Gent, "The Federal Communications Commission and its Deregulation of Media: Encouraging Innovation or Inhibiting Democracy?" *Drake Law Review* Vol. 67 No. 4 (2019), 1037-1058.
- Sept. 22 The Media as an Institution
• Bartholomew Sparrow, "A Research Agenda for an Institutional Media," *Political Communication* Vol. 23, No. 2 (2006): 145-158.
- Sept. 27: Professionalism: Media Attack Dogs; Media Lap Dogs
• Bartholomew Sparrow, *Uncertain Guardians: The News Media as a Political Institution*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019, Ch. 2, pp. 25-54.
* **Quiz 1**

- Sept. 29: Professionalism II: Journalists' Identity; Truth Finding
- Jane B. Singer, "Out of bounds: Professional norms as boundary markers," in *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*, eds. Matt Carlson and Seth C. Lewis. Routledge, 2015. Ch 1.
 - Alfred Hermida, "Nothing but the truth," *Boundaries of Journalism*, Ch. 2
- Oct. 4: The Economics of the Media
- Jan E. Leighley, *Mass Media and Politics: A Social Science Perspective*, Ch. 4, 71-91.
 - Martin Gilens and Craig Hertzman, "Corporate Ownership and News Bias: Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Telecommunication Act," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (2000): 369-386.
- Oct. 6: Surveillance Capitalism
- Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (New York: PublicAffairs Press, 2019), Ch. 1, pp. 3-17; Ch. 12, pp. 376-397.
- Oct. 11: Surveillance Capitalism II:
- Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, Ch. 18, pp. 495-525.
 - Read: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/aug/07/on-earth-4000-weeks-so-why-lose-time-online-distraction-oliver-burkeman>
- Media log begins: 48 consecutive hours**
- Part III Covering Politics and the Policy Process**
- Oct. 13: The Presidency
- Susan J. Douglas, "Presidents and the Media," in *Recapturing the Oval Office: New Historical Approaches to the American Presidency*, eds. Brian Balogh and Bruce J. Schulman (Cornell University Press, 2015), 143-161.
 - Jon Marshall, "Nixon is Gone, but His Media Strategy Lives On," *The Atlantic*, August 4, 2014.
- Oct. 18: Congress
- Brian F. Schaffner, "Local News Coverage and the Incumbency Advantage in the U.S. House," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, XXXI (Nov. 2006): 491-511.
 - Joshua D. Clinton and Ted Enamorado, "The National News Media's Effect on Congress: How *Fox News* Affected Elites in Congress," *The Journal of Politics*, 76, No. 4 (Oct. 2014): 928-943.
- Analytic Paper Due before class.**
- Oct. 20: The Judiciary
- William Haltom and Michael McCann, *Distorting the Law: Politics, Media, and the Litigation Crisis*, University of Chicago Press, 2004, Ch. 6.***
- * Quiz 2**
- Oct. 25: The Bureaucracy
- *The Post* (2017), dir. Steven Spielberg; Amazon Prime Video or YouTube. Watch outside of class.
 - Sparrow, *Uncertain Guardians*, Ch. 3, pp. 55-72.

- Oct. 27: Media Bias
Adam J. Shiffer, *Evaluating Media Bias* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), Ch. 3, pp. 37-56.***
Handout for Potential Research Topics
- Nov. 1: Media Bias Applied
Schiffer, *Evaluating Media Bias*, Ch. 5, 93-116.***
- Nov. 3: Twitter and Information
Richard Seymour, *The Twittering Machine* (New York: Verso, 2020), Ch. 5, 135-162.
Research Topics Due
- Part IV: The Media and the Public**
- Nov. 8: Portraying Others
• Jonathan McDonald Ladd, "The Role of Media Distrust in Partisan Voting," *Political Behavior*, Vol. 32 (2010): 567-585.
• Scott Parrott, Jennifer Hoewe, Minghi Fan, and Keith Huffman, "Portrayals of Immigrants and Refugees in U.S. News Media: Visual Framing and Its Effect on Emotions and Attitudes," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* Vol. 63 No. 4 (2019): 677-697.
- Nov. 10: The Daily Me
• Sounman Hong and Nayeong Kim, "Will the internet promote democracy? search engines, concentration of online news readership, and e-democracy," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2018): 388-399.
- Nov. 15: Constructing Race and Gender
• Luisi, Monique L. R., Robert Jones, and Tim Luisi, "Randall Pearson: Framing Black Identity, Masculinity, Adoption and Mental Health in Television," *Howard Journal of Communications*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2019): 71-85.
• Jonas R. Kunst, April Bailey, Claire Prendergast, and Aleksander Gundersen, "Sexism, Rape Myths and Feminist Identification Explain Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward the #metoo Social Media Campaign in Two Countries," *Journal of Media Psychology*, Vol. 22, No. 5 (2019): 818-843.
*** Quiz 3**
- Nov. 17: Fear and Terrorism
• Sunstein, *#Republic*, Ch. 10, pp. 234-251.***
- Nov. 22: Twitter
• Seymour, *Twittering Machine*, Ch. 6, pp. 163-195.
- Nov. 25: Thanksgiving Break

- Nov. 29: Democracy
Sunstein, *#Republic*. Ch. 11 and Afterward, pp. 252-267.
Student Research Presentations
Research Papers Due (paper copies, due at beginning of class)
- Dec. 1: Student Research Presentations
No assigned readings
- Dec. 3: Student Research Presentations
No assigned readings
- Dec. 6: Conclusion: Course Overview
*** Quiz 4**
TAKE HOME handed out, due on Dec. 11 by 4 pm, BAT 3.142.