

**GOVERNMENT 370S:****THE NEWS MEDIA AS A POLITICAL INSTITUTION**  
**Fall 2022**

Class Meeting: MW 2:30pm-4:00pm, CAL 200  
Unique No.: 38630  
Instructor: Bartholomew H. Sparrow  
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Office Hours: W: 4:00-5:00p, TU: 1:30-3:30p, 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.

**Text:** Victor Pickard, *Democracy Without Journalism? Confronting the Misinformation Society*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2020.

- Materials will be either posted on Canvas or are accessible online, through 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 (10% each); 40% of total.
- Media log (24 hrs.) and an analytic essay based on your journal, maximum 1,500 wds (10% and 10% respectively); 20% total.
- A short independent research paper (2,000-2,500 wds.) with a topic either assigned to you by the instructor or of your own choice (20%).
- Class presentation (two, total) as a “student of the day” who selects a quotation (from a couple of sentences to a paragraph in length) from that day’s reading and then asks a question generated by the selected quotation (5%).

**N.B.:** the question should be *based on the author’s argument or the theory in discussion*, and not merely a question about what others think about the quotation or how the quotation matches the present-day reality. You will be graded on the quality of the question as well as your quotation.

- Class participation (15%), which includes speaking (and listening!) in class, both with respect to quality and quantity; attendance, where 3 tardies count as 1 absence and every absence after the 4<sup>th</sup> absence results in each additional two-point penalty from the class participation grade—and, therefore, from your total grade.
- Summary: quizzes (40%); media log and paper (20%); research paper (20%); class quotations and 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 telephones, and other electronic devices need to be turned off: *using devices in class counts as an absence*. Note that I may not necessarily call you out in class; such silence does not mean that you 'phone usage is unobserved.
- Quizzes may not be made up. Special arrangements for changing the date when an assignment is due may be considered on an individual basis only *in exceptional circumstances* and only *in advance of the due date*.
- Let your instructor know in advance if you know you will be late for class or if you need to leave early for extraordinary reasons (e.g., job interview, court appearance). Also, let him know ahead of time if you have miss assignments for any reason or cannot otherwise participate in the class as expected.
- 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

**THE NEWS MEDIA AS A POLITICAL INSTITUTION**  
**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Introduction: The Media and Political Reality**

- Aug. 22, M: The Media as a Political Institution  
Introduction; review of syllabus.
- Aug. 24, W: Polarization  
• Victor Pickard, *Democracy Without Journalism?* Intro., pp. 1-10.  
• Cass R. Sunstein, *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media* Princeton University Press, 2018, Ch. 3, pp. 59-97.
- Aug. 29, M: The Protest Machine  
• Siva Vaidhyanathan, *Anti-Social Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2018. Chs. 5, pp. 128-145.
- Aug. 31, W: Political Suasion and Disinformation  
• Vaidhyanathan, *Anti-Social Media*, Chs. 6 and 7, pp. 146-195
- Sept. 5, M: Labor Day Holiday; no class
- Sept., 7, W: 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. 12, M: • Pickard, *Democracy Without Journalism?* Ch. 1, 11-39.
- Sept. 14, W: Watergate  
• Watch *All the President's Men* (available on YouTube).  
• Overview: <https://www.thejournal.ie/what-was-watergate-14-facts-richard-nixon-494970-Jun2012/>  
• Mark Feldstein, “Watergate Revisited,” *American Journalism Review*, Aug/Sept 2004, 60-68. <https://ajrarchive.org/Article.asp?id=3735>

**Part II: The Institutional Media**

- Sept. 19, M: 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.  
<https://lawreviewdrake.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/van-gent-final.pdf>  
• **Quiz 1**
- Sept. 21, W: The Current Media System  
• Pickard, *Democracy Without Journalism?* Ch. 2, 40-68.

- Sept. 26, M: Professionalism: Journalists and the Social Media  
 • Claudia Mellado & Alfred Hermida, “A Conceptual Framework for Journalistic Identity on Social Media,” *Digital Journalism*, 10:2 (2021), 284-99.  
[https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/21670811.2021.1907203?ca\\_sa\\_token=x7Kc9aDyn4cAAAAA:Oy-uU3\\_nJ4S-tJ5vVUhxsCjsc0LhYjGsaFOwaEZNrRE\\_uKdrZCBBkHKA83SUjJUBc0Pred4IjqYCw](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/21670811.2021.1907203?ca_sa_token=x7Kc9aDyn4cAAAAA:Oy-uU3_nJ4S-tJ5vVUhxsCjsc0LhYjGsaFOwaEZNrRE_uKdrZCBBkHKA83SUjJUBc0Pred4IjqYCw)
- Sept. 28: Media as Commerce  
 • Pickard, *Democracy Without Journalism?* Ch. 3, 69-103
- Oct. 3: Media Ownership  
 • Anya Schiffrin, *Media Capture: How Money, Digital Platforms, and Governments Control the News*. Columbia University Press, 2021. Ch. 1, pp. 3-22.
- Oct. 5, W: Digital Oligopoly  
 • Pickard, *Democracy Without Journalism?* Ch. 4, 104-135.
- Oct. 10, M: Surveillance Capitalism  
 • Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. New York: PublicAffairs Press, 2019. Ch. 1, pp. 3-17; Ch. 12, pp. 376-397.  
 • **Quiz 2**
- Oct. 12, W: 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: 24 consecutive hours**

### **Part III      Covering Politics and the Policy Process**

- Oct. 17, M: 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:  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/08/nixons-revenge-his-media-strategy-triumphs-40-years-after-resignation/375274/>
- Oct. 19, W: Congress  
 • 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.  
 • Kevin Arceneaux, Martin Johnson, René Lindstädt, Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Jan. 2016), pp. 5-29.  
**Analytic Paper Due in Class (by 2:30)**

- Oct. 24, M: The Courts  
• William Haltom and Michael McCann, *Distorting the Law: Politics, Media, and the Litigation Crisis*, University of Chicago Press, 2004, Ch. 6.
- Oct. 26, W: Who Guards the Guardians?  
• *The Post* (2017), dir. Steven Spielberg (Amazon Prime Video or YouTube). Watch outside of class.  
• Bartholomew Sparrow, “Shake up the FCC,” in *Fixing American Politics*, ed. Roderick P. Hart. New York: Rutledge, 2022. pp. 161-71.
- Oct. 31, M: Media Bias  
Adam J. Schiffer, *Evaluating Media Bias*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, Ch. 3, pp. 37-56.  
**Quiz 3**
- Nov. 2, W: Media Bias Applied  
Schiffer, *Evaluating Media Bias*, Ch. 5, 93-116.  
**Research Topics Due**
- Part IV: The Media and the Public**
- Nov. 7, M: 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. 9, W: 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. 14, M: 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.
- Nov. 16, W: Democracy  
Sunstein, #*Republic*. Ch. 11 and Afterward, pp. 252-267.
- Nov. 21,23: Thanksgiving Break
- Nov. 28, M: Student Research Presentations  
No assigned readings
- Nov. 30, W: Student Research Presentations  
No assigned readings  
**Research Papers Due** (paper copies, due at beginning of class)

Dec. 5:      Student Research Presentations  
No assigned readings  
**Quiz 4**