

**Spring 2009**  
**Political Science 314i/Journalism 314i**  
**Politics & The Media**

Professor: Philip Habel  
Email: habel@siu.edu  
Office: 3170 Faner Hall  
Office Hours: M-TH: 8:00 – 9:30 AM

Time: MWF: 1:00 – 1:50 PM  
Location: 201 Lawson Hall

Blackboard Webpage: <https://mycourses.siu.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct>

## 1 Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the influence of the mass media, particularly the news media, on politics in the United States. Students will be exposed to the growing body of literature examining the importance of traditional media such as newspapers and television to newer media, such as movies and the Internet. We will discuss the role of the media in the assessment and development of political attitudes and behavior. Attention will be paid to how both the public and governmental elites are influenced by media coverage of politics and the political system and how elites attempt to manipulate this coverage. We will also investigate the role of the media in campaigns and elections, paying particular attention to this past presidential election.

## 2 Student Learning Objectives

Students should be able to a.) understand how the disciplines of political science, sociology, communications, and journalism approach the many questions associated with media influence in politics; b.) acquire a basic knowledge of the structure and organization of the mass media and how these influence the way political actors and behavior are presented; c.) learn how the treatment of politics in the media influences individual political attitudes and behavior, as well as the political system and the policy outcomes that emerge from it; and d.) improve their writing and critical thinking abilities.

## 3 Course Overview

Chances are that within the last week, you were exposed to information reported by the media. Maybe you watched the evening news on the television, or you read a news story on the Internet, or maybe you saw something that interested you on the front page of the *Daily Egyptian*.

Perhaps you've paused at one point or another and reflected on the affect that the media has on your life. Maybe you were forced to go without the news for several days, and you began to feel less connected to the world around you. Or maybe you thought about the role of the media after you engaged in a political discussion with a friend, and you noticed that your friend's sources of information mattered a great deal for his/her political views.

In this course, we will spend time reflecting on the impact of the media on American politics, broadly conceived. We will discuss how, why, and to what extent the media influences the public's attitudes and behaviors. We will address the media's role in the policy process, focusing on interaction of the media and politicians. We will reflect on the types of news stories that get reported – that clear the media's gate – and how the media organize and frame these events. In the end, we will have described, explained, and evaluated critically the impact of the media on American politics.

The course will challenge you to consider some of the following issues: What do we mean by the media? How have the media evolved over time? How do the media act as gatekeepers? What differences does it make if one gets their news from the Oprah or from CNN? Is the media biased? What do we mean by framing and priming? How and why do politicians use the media? How do the media shape and form political ideas and messages? Do the media set the agenda? What impact does the media have on political attitudes? On campaigns? These are just some of the topics and issues we will cover this semester.

This course will offer an overview of the literature related to media and politics. Students should recognize that this course is purposefully about politics and the media, that themes such as how one crafts a news story or how the news is produced will not be covered. An introductory course in political science is not necessary to enroll in this course, although students with some background will likely find some terms and concepts easier to grasp. Your instructor will ensure that all of you are equipped to do well in the course, regardless of your background and training.

Your instructor is a proponent of the application of the scientific method to the study of media and politics. With this in mind, a sub-theme of the course will be the proper approach and means used to address questions of interest, which in turn, will help you as you complete your research assignments. I anticipate that your assignments will adopt appropriate research methodologies and reflect rigorous, analytical thinking. Moreover, I envision most of our sessions will feature discussions of the results of the scientific study of the media, which typically includes looking at graphs, figures, and tables together.

To facilitate students' understanding of the various topics and issues raised, I will assign three research projects that will require you to collect new data. To complete these assignments, students will make use of such programs such as *ProQuest Historical Newspapers* and/or *Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe* which are available through the university library system.

At the end of the term, I trust that you will have a strong understanding of the role of the media in American politics. It is my hope that your curiosity will have been incited, and that you will reflect on the themes we addressed for many years to come.

## 4 Course Requirements and Graded Evaluation

### 4.1 Available Points and Events Schedule

Item	Date	Points
Attendance and Participation	Daily	35
Exam 1	February 9	75
Exam 2	March 18	80
Final Exam	May 4, 2:00 to 3:50 PM	85
Research Assignment 1	February 4	40
Research Assignment 2	March 6	70
Research Assignment 3	April 22	60

### 4.2 Grading Scale

Total Points	Grade
450 to 405	A
404 to 360	B
359 to 315	C
314 to 270	D
Below 270	F

### 4.3 Attendance and Participation

Each student is expected to attend every lecture and to participate regularly. Attendance and participation points aside, it is simply impossible to do well in the course and not attend lecture. Note that attending daily does not ensure you will receive a high participation grade. That is, if you attend each day but do not participate, expect to score no higher than 21 (60%) for your attendance and participation score. Note that if you attend irregularly but participate often, again your score will be no higher than 21. Students are expected to both attend and to engage in class discussions.

Discussions also provide a means for the instructor to assess your progress; that is, I spend more time on material if I find students are in need of more clarification. I rely in part on our discussions and on your questions to clarify your progress.

All lecture notes are provided to students via Blackboard. Students are expected to download and print lectures slides to bring with them to class each day. Notes are provided for your benefit.

### 4.4 Exam 1, Exam 2, and Final Exam

There will be three exams, February 9, March 18, and May 4. You will have the entire period to complete each exam, which will be comprised of multiple choice, short answer, and essay sections. The exams are not cumulative, although students should be aware that material overlaps throughout the semester.

## 4.5 Research Assignments

You will complete three research assignments related to themes from the course, which will be posted on the Blackboard website. Assignments will be discussed in detail during lecture on the dates scheduled. The assignments will ask you to collect data and to analyze it. You are expected to tie your analysis to course themes and readings.

All assignments will be due at the beginning of class on the assigned date, and electronic copies of your assignment must be submitted by this time to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). Of course you are welcome to submit your assignment early. If for reason of emergency you cannot attend class on the day the assignment is due, your timely submission to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) will prevent you from incurring a point deduction. Assignments submitted late will face a deduction of 10 points per 24 hours, including weekends. There will be no exception to the late policy deduction, even in cases of emergency.

In order to submit assignments through [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com), you will need the class enrollment id, 2547756, and the class password, habel. If you have not used this website before, you will need to create an account. Click “New Users Click Here” on the upper right hand corner of the screen.

## 4.6 Research Assignment 1

You will examine the press’ gatekeeping function. You will locate one of President Obama’s speeches, and then look at what information was presented (and what was excluded) about the speech in the national news media.

## 4.7 Research Assignment 2

You will replicate an analysis concerning whether the media engages in “constructed deliberation.” Benjamin Page (1996) examined editorials, columns, and letters to the editor presented in the *New York Times* at the time of the Persian Gulf War of 1991, finding evidence of that the views communicated on the editorial page were skewed. You will replicate Page’s analysis for the current Iraq War, determining whether the views presented on the editorial page of the *New York Times* advanced the political agenda of the newspaper’s editors/publishers. You will be randomly assigned to a partner with whom you will complete this project. Of all the assignments, this one requires the most time and energy.

## 4.8 Research Assignment 3

You will consider the press’ role in elections, looking back at the 2008 election. You will select a figure from the Patterson 1993 text among a set of options I make available to you, and you will provide an update of the figure using data from this past election. You will rely on content analysis of news media publications and/or public opinion polling data, both of which you will access through our university’s library system.

## **5 Class Policies**

### **5.1 Contacting Your Professor**

Your instructor is readily available to answer your questions during office hours. Email is best for clarification purposes. All written communication, including emails, must be properly addressed and written. Your emails should a.) identify the course in email's subject heading b.) respectfully address your instructor c.) use capital letters, periods, and appropriate grammar d.) include your first and last name. Emails that fail to accomplish these tasks will be ignored.

### **5.2 Absences**

See Attendance and Participation, Section 4.3

### **5.3 Tardiness, Leaving Class Early, and Appropriate Behavior**

My courses reward students who attend class, put forth a high level of effort, and accept responsibility for their education. Attendance is taken regularly in this course. Students who arrive in class after attendance has been taken or who leave early will not receive credit for being in class, unless permission from the instructor has been arranged in advance.

Students will not receive attendance or participation points if found engaging in disruptive behavior, which includes holding conversations with one another, sleeping, reading the newspaper, doing homework, using an IPOD, text messaging, or engaging in any other activity unrelated to the course. Laptop computers are to be used for note taking purposes only.

### **5.4 Makeup Exams**

There will be no make-up exams except in cases of emergency, as specified in Section 5.8.2 below, or where university policy applies. If you miss an exam, you will receive a 0. If you are late to an exam, you must take the exam in time remaining. If you arrive after the first student has completed his/her exam, you will receive a 0. If you are eligible to take a makeup exam, the format will be entirely essay.

### **5.5 Grading Policies & Standards**

Graded exams and papers will be returned as promptly as possible. We will spend some time going over the exam on the date that it is returned to you. If you have questions about your grades, you should come and talk with your instructor during office hours.

### **5.6 Cheating and Academic Misconduct**

Any student engaging in cheating/plaigerism will receive an F in the course and will be reported to the Dean for further disciplinary action, as outlined in the university code of student conduct. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating/plaigerism, you should examine the university policy and/or ask the instructor prior to turning in any assignment. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with university policy. As a means to thwart plagiarism, all assignments will be submitted electronically via turnitin.com.

## 5.7 Disability Policy

It is the policy of this university and this professor to help disabled individuals succeed in the classroom. The student is responsible for notifying the professor and the university of any special problems or needs as soon as possible. The professor and university are responsible for doing whatever they can within university policy to accommodate the student. For more information, please contact Kathleen Plesko at Disabled Student Services or go to the DSS homepage. <http://www.siu.edu/dss>

## 5.8 Problems and Emergencies

There are three types of problems and emergencies that may arise:

### 5.8.1 Problems the Due Date of an Assignment

If a problem arises the day an assignment is due, you are still required to submit the assignment on time via [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). That is, no late work is accepted for conditions such as illness, poor weather, computer and printer problems, traffic violations, etc. If you cannot attend class the day an assignment is due, you should submit your assignment to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com), and you should bring a printed copy of your paper to the next lecture you are able to attend.

### 5.8.2 Problems the Day of an Exam

If a problem or emergency arises that will prevent you from attending an exam, you should contact me as soon as possible. If you are ill, I expect to be contacted via email before the exam. If you have another extenuating circumstance arise, you must contact me as soon as possible, no later than 24 hours after the exam. Contacts can be either by email, in person, or by contacting the political science department at 618-536-2371. If you are unable to take an exam due to sickness, you must provide evidence that you visited a doctor. Note that the format for a makeup exam under any circumstance will be entirely essay.

### 5.8.3 General Problems

If a problem arises that impedes your ability to perform well in the course, you must communicate with me in some fashion at the onset or early stages of the crisis. I understand that family situations, personal problems, or other circumstances can arise. I will make arrangements with you regarding how to deal with the situation provided you alert me to the problem early. Note that the later you wait to alert me to the problem, the less I can do to help you.

## 5.9 SIU's Emergency Response Plan

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on the BERT'S website at [www.bert.siu.edu](http://www.bert.siu.edu), Department of Public Safety's website [www.dps.siu.edu](http://www.dps.siu.edu) (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guidelines pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

## 6 Course Readings

The reading assignments form the foundation of our lectures and discussions. You are expected to keep up with the readings. Please notify the instructor regarding any problems in obtaining the readings immediately, including problems with logging onto the Blackboard website. The materials below are required and can be found at either the campus bookstore or through the course website. We will be using a combination of core texts and articles published in the top political science and communication journals, many of which have been published within the last few years. Texts and articles were selected to balance high quality and relatively low cost. In the case of the articles, all can be accessed through the Blackboard site.

### 6.1 Textbooks

The following are available at the bookstore:

- Graber, Doris. 2006 *Mass Media & American Politics*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. ISBN: 1568029179.
- Patterson, Thomas. 1994. *Out of Order* New York: Knopf Press. ISBN: 0679755101

### 6.2 Articles

The following are available through the course webpage, <https://mycourses.siu.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct>

- Althaus, Scott, Nathaniel Swigger, Christopher Tiwald, Svitlana Cherynkh, David Hendry, and Sergio Walls. Working Paper. Paper presented for the Chicago Area Political Behavior Conference at Northwestern University. May 9, 2008.
- Baum, Matthew. 2002. "Sex, Lies, and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public." *American Political Science Review* 96: 91-109.
- Bennett, W. Lance, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston. 2006. "None Dare Call It Torture: Indexing and the Limits of Press Independence in the Abu Ghraib Scandal." *Journal of Communication* 56: 467-485.
- Entman, Robert M. 2005. "The Nature and Sources of News." In *Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*. eds. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Iyengar, Shanto and Andrew F. Simon. 1993. "News Coverage of the Gulf War and Public Opinion: A Study of Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing." *Communication Research* 20: 365-384.

- Gilens, Martin. 1996. "Race and Poverty in America: Public Misperceptions and the American News Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60: 513-535.
- Gilliam, Franklin D. Jr., and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. "Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public." *American Journal of Political Science* 44:560-573
- Lawrence, Regina G. 1996. "Accidents, Icons, and Indexing: The Dynamics of News Coverage of Police Use of Force." *Political Communication* 13: 437-454.
- McCombs, Maxwell. 2005. "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press." In *Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*. eds. Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Morton, Rebecca B. 2005. "The Mass Media and Voters' Information." In *Analyzing Elections*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance." *American Political Science Review* 91: 567-583.
- Page, Benjamin. 1996. "The *New York Times* Goes to War with Iraq." In *Who Deliberates?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Prior, Markus. 2005. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge." *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 577-592.
- Tewksbury, David. 2003. "What Do Americans Really Want to Know? Tracking the Behavior of News Readers on the Internet." *Journal of Communication* 53: 694-710.
- Scheufle, Dietram A. and David Tewksbury. 2007. "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models." *Journal of Communication* 57: 9-20.
- Zaller, John. 2003. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Political Communication* 20: 109-130.

## 7 Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

### 7.1 Discussion Schedule

Below is the course schedule. I anticipate that there will be few if any changes, although I reserve the right to alter our schedule as necessary. There will be no changes concerning the due dates of assignments or the times and dates of the exams.

Date	Topic	Reading Discussed
January 12	Course Introduction	
January 14	Media& Government	Graber 1
January 16	Ownership & Press Freedom	Graber 2 & 3
January 21	Ownership & Press Freedom	Graber 2 & 3
January 23	Assignment 1 Discussion	
January 26	News Making & Reporting	Graber 4 & 5
January 28	News Making & Reporting	Graber 4 & 5
January 30	News Sources & Citizens	Tewksbury 2003
February 2	News Sources & Citizens	Prior 2005
February 4	News Standards	Entman 2005, Zaller 2003
February 6	News Standards	Entman 2005, Zaller 2003
February 9	Exam 1	
February 11	Extraordinary Events/War	Graber 6
February 13	War	Graber 11
February 16	War	Althaus et. al. 2008
February 18	Soft News & War	Baum 2002
February 20	The Editorial Page & War	Page 1996
February 23	Assignment 2 Discussion	
February 25	Media & Policy	Graber 7
February 27	Media & Policy	Graber 7
March 2	Media Bias	Morton 2006
March 4	Media Bias	Morton 2006
March 6	Agenda Setting, Framing, Priming	McCombs 2005, Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007
March 16	Agenda Setting, Framing, Priming	Iyengar & Simon 1993
March 18	Exam 2	
March 20	Media & Tolerance	Nelson et. al. 1997
March 23	Media & Tolerance	Nelson et. al. 1997
March 25	Media & Racial Attitudes	Gilens 1996
March 27	Media & Racial Attitudes	Gilens 1996
March 30	Elections	Graber 8, Patterson 1993 Ch 1
April 1	Class Canceled for Conference	
April 3	Class Canceled for Conference	
April 6	Elections	Patterson 1994 Ch 2
April 8	Elections	Patterson 1994 Ch 3
April 10	Assignment 3 Discussion	
April 13	Media & Congress/Presidency	Graber 9
April 15	Media & Congress: Indexing	Bennett et. al. 2006
April 17	Media & Congress	Simon & Jerit 2007
April 20	Courts & State/Local	Graber 10
April 22	Local News & Crime	Lawrence 1996
April 24	Class Canceled for Conference	
April 27	Local News & Crime	Gilliam & Iyengar 2000
April 29	Trends & Predictions	Graber 12
May 1	Course Overview	
May 4	Final Exam	