

The Media, Politics, and Public Opinion

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Course description:

Examines the central role media play in politics and the nature of their impacts on public opinion, political agenda setting and agenda building in democratic politics.

Topics include: Characteristics of public opinion; theories of communication, propaganda, charisma; muckraking/ investigative and manipulative journalism, political symbolism and media literacy; impact of interactive audiences, elections and domestic/global policy making in a technological age; opinion leaders; spin-doctors; and coverage and impact of extraordinary events on political decision and policy making.

Course goals:

- To enhance your spoken English, as well as your research, writing, and analytical skills
- To enhance your existing awareness of mediated reality in the political realm
- To encourage use of these skills in the area of campaign organization/management for a public cause
- To gain practical experience in the preparation of a formal presentation (either power-point or overhead)

Required readings will be available on electronic reserve or will be distributed in class.

For recommended readings, please see the Addendum.

Course Requirements: (For details see the Addendum.)

There are no exams in this course. However, there is a major research project and formal presentation that involves team work. Some class time will be allocated as workshop time for team meetings to discuss the team projects.

1. Students will work in small groups (2-3 students) to plan a media campaign for either a candidate or a policy.
2. Presentation: Each team will present its campaign towards the end of the semester. Further details will be given in class.
3. Fulfillment of all reading assignments. This will be indicated by the submission of three questions + three comments relating to the overall assigned readings for that particular class. These Qs and Cs must be computer generated, in English. (See Addendum for details.)
4. Attendance, lateness, participation, and grading policies will also be discussed in the Addendum.

Course Content and Assignments:

- Suggestion: READ carefully; take notes. Be prepared to discuss the readings. Feel free to ask questions and voice your opinions. I believe in the importance of hearing diverse opinions. They are encouraged and will be respected.
- Remember: You are required to submit three questions + three comments for the overall assignment. Submission of these Qs and Cs will count as 25% of your grade. Should you miss a class, for whatever reason, the Qs /Cs are still required.
- Assignments are due on the dates indicated below.

October 27

Introduction, course overview/requirements. Review of theories (communication, propaganda, cross-cultural, charisma, etc.). Roles/responsibilities of the media. Understanding political symbolism through media literacy; implications of the knowledge-gap hypothesis. Your criticisms of the media.

Video: *The Best Campaign Money Can Buy* -- VCV-3372

Preview assignment for next week.

November 3

Importance of mass media as a force for political and social change. Media functions: Lasswell and others. Who do the media serve? Who should the media serve? Understanding the adversarial role of the press. Effects of mass media. Blending new and old information. Who should control news-making? Who does control news-making? News-making models and control methods.

News-making models and control methods. Learning effects, orientations, psychological barriers to modernization. . . . Media impact on behavior and attitude; the differential effects of print and broadcast media; media role in political socialization; uses and gratification theory.

Agenda-setting theories and agenda building by the media. Who decides?
Debate: Market forces vs. editorial judgments? How real is mediated politics in Israel?

Politics, Power, and Perceptions. Critics vs. the supporters. Can the public be participants in journalism? Effects of new technologies, political consequences.

V.O. Keys and his characteristics of public opinion; Gabriel Almond on the attentive public.

Reading Assignment:

1. Ch. 1, Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, 5th Ed.

2. Ch. 7, Graber

*Submit Qs+Cs. (#1)

**Workshop time will be set aside for teams to meet.

November 10

Media-government relationship. What is news? Identify the arguments on both sides of the debate. What is your opinion? With which side do you agree? Why?

The interactive audience, political socialization. Discussion on R. Altschull's "symphonic classification system." Purposes of journalism

Reading Assignment:

1. Ch. 10, 121-130, Dennis & Merrill

2. Ch. 14, 166-174, "Propaganda and the Media" Everette E. Dennis & John Merrill, *Media*

Debate: Issues in Mass Communication

3. Ch. 10, 146-157, Richard Davis, *The Press and American Politics* 2nd Ed.

*Submit Qs + Cs. (#2)

**Submit team's list of 3 topics for semester project.

November 17

Image and campaign style; image as transaction; technology and campaign style; impact of TV on campaign style; incumbency style; symbolic trappings of office; charisma and the office . . .

Pragmatic strategies of incumbency. Eighteen strategies, including: Pseudo-events; manipulating the economy; depending on surrogates for the campaign trail; consulting or

negotiating with foreign leaders; attacking the record of opponents; calling for a change; appearing to represent the party's philosophical center, etc.

Reading Assignment:

Ch. 3, 63-104, Communicative styles and strategies of political campaigns, J.S. Trent and R.V. Friedenberg, *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices*, 4th Ed.

Video: *Illusions of News*.

Submit Qs + Cs. (#3)

November 24

The early U.S. press: functions; how the public was served; impact of the penny press on politics.

Communicative mass channels of political campaigning. Theories revisited: Hypodermic effect; limited effects or the social influence model. Putting theory and practice together: Spreading the news (diffusion of information); getting people to listen (uses and gratifications); getting them to think about your candidate/cause (agenda-setting). Consider the impact on politics.

Reading Assignment:

1. Ch. 2, Davis

2. Ch. 4, Trent/Friedenberg

*Submit Qs + Cs. (#4)

**Workshop time.

December 1

Debate and post-debate strategies. Debates in political campaigns. Functions and effects of political debates. Increase audiences, reinforcement, shift some voters, help set voters' agenda, increase voter knowledge, modify candidate's image, etc.

Reading Assignment:

Ch. 8, 250-283, Trent/Friedenberg

Video: Bill Moyers, *Leading Questions* -- VCV 3594.

*Submit Qs + Cs. (#5)

December 8

Growth of press power. Sensationalism of "Yellow journalism"; functionalism of muckraking.

Emergence of corporate-operated press; impact of advertising; new vs. old relationships. How business strategy shapes media content. Media as policy makers. Muckraking models: simple, leaping impact, truncated. Agenda-setting.

Reading Assignment:

1. Ch. 3, 35-55, Davis

2. Ch. 6, 156-186, Graber

*Submit Qs + Cs. (#6)

**Workshop time.

December 15

How business strategy shapes media content. "Fluff and Stuff"; the L.A. Times case and censorship and conflict of interest. Any similarities with ownership patterns of the Israeli media? What is the impact on political campaigns in Israel? Perspective. Freedom of the press and attempts to use it, control it, or silence it.

Reading Assignment:

1. Ch. 5, Croteau & Hoynes, The Business of Media
2. Ch 2, 33-44, Joseph C. Spear, Presidents and the Press (MIT Press, 1984)

*Submit Qs + Cs. (#7)

**Workshop Time.

December 22

Forms of control; ownership patterns; regulation of media, industry. Advertising pressures. Market size (GE); '96 Telecommunications Act, the FCC. Impact of citizen lobby.

Ownership patterns in Israel. Who owns what? Do they affect media coverage, politics, policy making?

Reading Assignment:

Ch. 2, 33-55, Graber

*Submit Qs + Cs. (#8)

**Presentation time for Overseas Students.

December 29

Advertising in political campaigns; developing a master plan for political advertising; six factors to consider; five guidelines for designing direct mail . . .

Reading Assignment:

Ch. 10, 319-358 Trent/Friedenberg, Political Campaign Communication

*Submit Qs + Cs. (#9)

**Workshop time.

January 5

Candidate Commercials: Negative ads.

Media electoral roles. Increased dependency on the media, which acts as an electoral intermediary; "mentioner"; categorizer; expectation-setter; agenda-setter; winnowing, and chief critic.

Media-based policy making; political campaigns; shaping the image.

Reading Assignment:

1. Ch. 10, 201-204, Shirley Biagi,

2. Ch. 12, 171-190, Davis

3. Ch. 13, 193-215, Davis

*Submit Qs + Cs. (#10)

**Presentations.

Please note: You are required to read the following two assignments (for Jan. 12 and Jan. 19), but Qs + Cs are not required for either of them.

January 12

Press freedom; access and the right of reply. The freedom of information act; access to government documents and the public's right to know, fair trial and the gag rule.

Media Debates: Individual rights vs. the public's right to know. Privacy protection; shield and libel laws; national security; the Pentagon Papers case.

Debate: The American press is/is not free.

The Ross Perot-type of "instant referendum," and televised "town hall" meetings. How newspapers still setting America's agenda.

Reading Assignment:

1. Ch. 3, 58-88, Graber
 2. Ch. 1, 5-16, Dennis & Merrill
 3. 232-239, Michael Krantz, in Shirley Biagi's, *Media Reader*, 3rd Ed.
- **Presentations.

January. 19

Emphasizing conflict, violence and the extraordinary events (ex.: Events of 9/11/01, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, attacks in Israel. . .).

Positive and negative effects of coverage.

Reading Assignment:

1. Ch. 4, 118-129, Graber
 2. Ch. 5, 135-153, Graber
- **Presentations.
Summing up.

Addendum: Miscellaneous Information

1. Reading assignments: Given that there are no exams, these assignments are extremely important: Completion of reading assignments will be demonstrated in two ways:

(a) by the submission three questions and three comments relating to the overall assigned readings for that particular class. These must be computer generated, typed double-spaced in English.

(b) by incorporating the relevant and appropriate readings in your project and presentation to help provide a theoretical basis for your research and analysis.

Each assignment will be graded on the basis of your ability to identify the key issues presented, or—while relevant—essentially glossed over, ignored or missed by the writer.

These assignments must be computer generated. Please keep a copy for yourself. Always be sure your name, assignment number, and date of submission appear at the top of your paper. Place the first assignment in a file folder with your name on it before submitting it to me. I will hold on to all the assignments you submit (keeping them in your file). At the end of the semester, I shall return the file with the graded assignments.

2. The Project: Create a political campaign to achieve well-defined political goals.

Note: The due date for the final project paper will be announced in class.

Note: Students from the Overseas Program may mail me their papers if they cannot complete them before they leave.

Each team will identify two possible political campaigns or processes in a country of your choice (here in Israel or abroad).

Campaigns can include:

- a) an election process or a campaign to create a new political party.
- b) the evolution and development of a social welfare, economic, political, or national security issue or legislation, and how it ought to be dealt with.

On 10 November 2003, each team will submit two topics (in order of preference). At the top of the page, please type the names of the students on the team. Please identify one of the team members as the "team leader" or spokesperson.

For each proposed topic, please include a brief paragraph, explaining:

- a) The nature of the campaign (for an individual, a party, a policy, etc.).
- b) The goal(s).
- c) The rationale: Why the team believes this campaign is important and worthy of the effort to mold or change public opinion.
- d) The target audience: Your preliminary assessment of which constituencies will be most interested in this campaign.

By the following class (17 November) I hope to have approved one of the topics. I will try to approve your first choice.

Once your team's topic is approved, the team should decide on the division of labor to complete this project. You may use various research strategies, including Internet and Web searches, as well as personal interviews, if possible.

- a) Identify the key issues in the campaign.

- b) Research the events and causes that led to the perceived need that something must be done.
- c) Research and target the appropriate actors, institutions, audiences, and relevant channels of communication.
- d) Map out a strategy to "re-set" the public agenda by attracting media attention: Design a plan for information dissemination, including "events" and "pseudo-events."
- e) From an agenda-building perspective, explain how the campaign organizers can best move the issue to center stage, where the public and the policy makers will begin to focus their attention on it.
- f) Consider how best to "frame" the campaign to attract campaign contributors and supporters.
- g) Estimate costs (based on specific research of media advertising rates and other projected expenses) and personnel (paid as well as volunteer) needs.
- h) Establish criteria to assess the outcome of the effort.
- j) Make a formal (PowerPoint or over-head projector) team presentation during the last few weeks of the spring semester, and
- k) **Individually**, write up your own (**personal**) final report, citing relevant readings that provided a theoretical basis for analysis. Describe the problems encountered, mistakes made, and how they were or were not resolved. Include in your paper any class comments, questions and answers that resulted from your presentation and with which you either agreed or disagreed. Explain why..

Additional details, instructions, and guidance will be provided in class. Please feel free to ask questions.

3. Attendance policy: Since our classes consist of double sessions, **three** or more unexcused absences (outside of military reserve duty) will result in a loss of credit and a lowered grade. Attendance will be kept. Beginning with the **third** absence, three percentage points will be deducted from the final grade for each unexcused absence.

4. Lateness policy: As stated above, lateness is disruptive and cannot be tolerated. Every two latenesses will be considered as one unexcused absence, and will result in the same loss of credit.

5. Grading system:

Since there are no exams in this course, the grade will be based on the following:

Participation in a team-planned political campaign: Individually written report and analysis of the team-designed campaign	30%
Presentation: Individual participation in a formal (professional), oral presentation, using either PowerPoint or overhead projection.	15
Weekly submission of Qs + Cs	25
Participation: Students must participate in class discussions. This can be done by: introducing new, but related, issues; raising questions and issues based on the reading assignments; or, by commenting on the remarks of others.	15
Attendance/promptness	10
My evaluation of your effort and commitment	5

6. Office hours:

Mondays 12:30 to 1:30, and by appointment on Tuesdays and Wednesdays
Office: Room 8036

Telephone numbers: Cell: 052-78-30-36; Home phone: 03-933-7162

Recommended Reading List

Students are encouraged to consult the following readings in connection with the project papers.

Altheide, D.L., *Media Power* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985).

Altschull, J. Herbert, *Agents of Power* (NY: Longman, 1995), combines practice with theory to explain how the social control function of the news media operates in and impacts on policy making in actual micro-political, economic, and cultural settings.

Alexander, Alison & Jarice Hanson, eds., *Taking Sides* (CT: Brown & Benchmark, 1996), examines the political and social impact of the media.

Bennett, W.L., *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 2nd ed., (NY: Longman, 1988).

Beell, Thomas, ed., *Messages 4* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), includes an important chapter on the media and various political systems, such as Nigeria, Algeria, and Slovakia, thereby introducing a cross-cultural component.

Boorstin, Daniel, *The Image* (Atheneum, 1972), continues to examine America's pragmatic political style, what historian Boorstin earlier called the "genius of American politics."

Cohen, Jeff & Norman Solomon, *Through the Media Looking Glass* (Courage Common Press, 1995), attempts to decode what the authors identify as "bias and blather" in the news.

Crouse, Timothy, *The Boys on the Bus*, (NY: Random House, 1973) provides an analysis of the reporters assigned to cover presidential candidates as they travel around the country during the primary and general election campaigns.

Davis, Richard, *The Press and American Politics: The New Mediator*, 2nd ed. (NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996), examines the impact of the news media on politics. This syllabus includes several chapters from this book. The unassigned chapters are also worth reading.

Dennis, Everett E., *Reshaping the Media* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1989), discusses the politics of media credibility in its coverage of politics and elections.

. *Media at War* (NY: Gannett Center for Media Studies, 1991), examines the role of the press during the Persian Gulf War.

Dennis, Everett E. & John C. Merrill, *Media Debates* (NY: Longman, 1996), provides the pros and cons in several controversial areas.

Devlin, P.D., "Trends in Political Television Advertising," in J. Trent, ed., *Views from the Helm in the 21st Century* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997.)

Diamond, Edwin & Stephen Bates, *The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television*, 3rd Ed. (MA: MIT Press, 1992).

Downing, J., *The Media Machine* (London: Pluto Press, 1980).

Graber, Doris A., *Media Power in Politics*, 3rd ed. (Cong. Quarterly, 1993). Contains essays exploring the media's ability to shape political agendas.

. *Mass Media and American Politics*, 5th ed. (Cong. Quarterly, Inc., 1997), examines the major changes in the media and their affect on politics. This syllabus includes several chapters from this book. The unassigned chapters are also worth reading.

Hahn, Dan F., *Political Communication: Rhetoric, Government, and Citizens* (Strata Publishing, Inc. 1997).

Jamieson, Kathleen Hall, *Packaging the Presidency*, 2nd Ed. (NY: Oxford, 1996), provides a history and criticism of presidential campaign advertising.

Jowett, G.S. & V.O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986).

Kerbel, Matt. R., *Remote & Controlled: Media Politics in a Cynical Age* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995).

MacDonald, J. Fred, *One Nation Under Television* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1990), contains two relevant chapters on the shaping of a national culture, and on the politics of television.

Mitroff, Ian I. & Warren Bennis, *The Unreality Industry* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), analyzes cases of deliberate manufacturing of falsehood by the media, in what the author identifies as a "hero-less, leaderless society."

Nacos, Brigitte L., Robert Y. Shapira, & Pierangelo Isernia, *Decision-making in a Glass House: Mass Media, Public Opinion: American and European Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*, (NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2000).

Nimmo, Dan & James E. Combs, *Mediated Political Realities* (NY: Longman, 1990), contains relevant chapters on the mediated contests of presidential campaigning and on the mediation of conspiracy theories and the American political tradition.

Norris, Pippa, ed., *Women, Media, and Politics* (NY: Oxford, 1997).

Parenti, Michael, *Inventing Reality: The Politics of the Mass Media* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1986), focuses on analysis of the news media.

Patterson, Thomas E., *Out of Order* (NY: Vintage, 1994), provides a critique of the news media's domination of America's political process.

Roszak, Theodore, *The Cult of Information* (University of Cal., 1994), contains an interesting chapter on the politics of information and another on government and communication technologies gone astray.

Rubenstein, Sondra M., *Surveying Public Opinion* (CA: Wadsworth, 1995), examines the history of public opinion survey research; describes the survey process and discusses the impact of polling on the political process.

Shaheen, Jack, *The TV Arab* (Bowling Green St. U., 1984) reviews the biased media presentations of Arabs and its impact on policy making.

Spear, Joseph C., *Presidents and the Press* (MIT, 1986), examines government appeasement and intimidation of the press as it reacts to media coverage of politics and policy-making.

Stempel, G.H., *The Practice of Political Communication* (NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1994).

Trent, Judith S. & Robert V. Friedenberg, *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices*, 4th Ed. (CN: Praeger, 2000).

Ward, Hiley H., *Mainstreams of American History*, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997).

Weimann, Gabriel & Conrad Winn, *The Theater of Terror* (NY: Longman, 1994), provides a theoretical and critical perspective of the media's role in coverage of international acts terrorism and the spillover effects into policymaking.

Woodward G.C., *Perspectives on American Political Media*, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997).

Zaremba, Alan Jay, *Mass Communication and International Politics* (Sheffield, 1988),

presents a case study of press reactions to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and its impact on public opinion.