

Professor Regenstreif

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Harkness 335

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Office Hours: Mondays, 9:30 am - Noon

POLITICAL SCIENCE 217: POLITICS AND THE MASS MEDIA

This course will consider the relationship between politics and the mass media, analyzing the structure of public opinion, the institutions of opinion formation and the behavior of political and mass media elites.

Class meets each week throughout the semester on Monday afternoons. Each session will begin with a lecture which will be followed by extensive class discussion.

The following books have been stocked by the bookstore:

Bennett, W. Lance, *News, The Politics of Illusion* (Seventh Edition)

Graber, Doris A., *Mass Media and American Politics* (Seventh Edition)

It will be assumed that students will have read the above as well as a selection of the material assigned for each topic and listed below.

In addition, they will be expected to have watched some television, listened to some radio, surfed the Internet and perused at least two newspapers per week during the course of the semester.

Graber's *Mass Media and American Politics* is the closest thing to a text there is. Bennett's *News, The Politics of Illusion* is iconoclastic and a useful debunking of a great deal of the myth surrounding media. In the past, I have included two classics on the required reading list: *The Boys on the Bus*, by Timothy Crouse and *Deciding What's News* by Herbert Gans. Alas, they are both out of print. I still recommend that you read them if you can get your hands on copies.

REQUIREMENTS: each student must produce two short papers (between 5 and 8 pages) on topics assigned. These papers will each count for 25 per cent of the final grade (for a total of 50 per cent). The papers must be submitted by the deadlines indicated on the accompanying assignment sheet. There will also be an exam which will count for the remaining 50 per cent of the grade.

As the following indicates, the course is organized by topics, some occupying more than one session. Readings and research activities are suggested where appropriate.

TOPICS:

1. Introduction

Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, pp. 1-30.

2. Public Opinion and Politics

Eugene Burdick and Arthur J. Brodbeck, *American Voting Behavior*, esp. pp. 5-54.

Skim the following:

Angus Campbell, *et al.*, *The American Voter*
Angus Campbell, *et al.*, *Elections and the Political Order*
Norman Nie, *et al.*, *The Changing American Voter*
V.O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy*

3. Opinion Polls: Uses and Abuses

Skim the following:

Leo Bogart, *Silent Politics*
Michael Wheeler, *Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics*

4. The News Media: Organization, Imperatives, Personnel

W. Lance Bennett, *News, The Politics of Illusion.*, Pp. 1-73; 153-219
Timothy Crouse, *The Boys on the Bus* (if you can)
Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News* (if you can)
Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, pp. 31-125; 148-181.
Newport, Frank and Lydia Saad, "A Matter of Trust," *American Journalism Review*,
July/August, 1998, pp. 30-33.
Columbia Journalism Review, (Special 40th Anniversary Issue), November/December, 2001

Skim the following:

Douglass Cater, *The Fourth Branch of Government*

5. National Television News: Similarities and Contrasts Among the Networks

R. Goldberg & G.J. Goldberg, *Anchors: Brokaw, Jennings, Rather and the Evening News*

Paul Farhi, "Nightly News Blues," *American Journalism Review*, June, 2001, pp. 33-37.

Watch the network news programs as well as CNN-Headline News. Explore blogs on-line.

6. Local Television News; Radio

Neil Hickey, "Chicago Experiment — Why it failed," *Columbia Journalism Review*, January/February, 2001, pp. 15-19.

Watch local news programs on different channels; listen to some radio; again, surf for blogs.

7. Print: The Newspaper --- Decline and Fall?

Other Print Sources --- Weekly Newsmagazines, Journals

Stepp, Carl Sessions, "How to Save America's Newspapers," *American Journalism Review*, April, 1993, pp. 18-24.

Skim the following:

Howard Bray, *The Pillars of the Post*

David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be*

Harrison E. Salisbury, *Without fear or Favor*

Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power*

Read different newspapers, both local and from other cities; and blogs.

8. The Media and Political Campaigns: National, State and Local Variations

Timothy Crouse, *The Boys on the Bus* (if you can)

Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, pp. 218-247.

Joe McGinnis, *The Selling of the President, 1968*

Larry J. Sabato, *Feeding Frenzy: Attack Journalism and American Politics*, 2000

Skim the following:

Robert Agranoff, *The New Style in Election Campaigns*
James David Barber (ed.), *The Pulse of Politics: Electing Presidents in the Media Age*
Everett C. Ladd, Jr., *Transformations of the American Party System*
Austin Ranney (ed.), *The Past and Future of Presidential Debates*

9. The Political Commercial

Michael Arlen, *Thirty Seconds*
Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Dirty Politics: Deception, Distraction and Democracy*

10. Covering Offices and Office Holders

W. Lance Bennett, *News, The Politics of Illusion*, pp. 109-152
Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, pp. 248-351.
M.B. Grossman and M.J. Kumar, *Portraying the President:
The White House and the News Media*
Stephen Hess, *The Washington Reporters*

Skim the following:

Stephen Hess, *The Government/Press Connection*
Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*

11. Crisis Coverage

Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, pp. 126-181.
Larry J. Sabato, *Feeding Frenzy: Attack Journalism and American Politics*, 2000
American Journalism Review, November, 2001
“Into the Abyss - Reporting Iraq 2003-2006: An oral History, *Columbia Journalism Review*,
November/December 2006, pp.14-78

Skim the following:

Dan Nimmo and James E. Coombs, *Nightly Horrors:
Crisis Coverage in Television Network News*

12. The Impact: Much Ado About Nothing?

- W. Lance Bennett, *News, The Politics of Illusion*, pp. 74-108
Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, pp. 182-217
V.O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, pp. 344-410.

Skim the following:

- Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News That Matters*
Kathleen Hall Jamieson & Paul Waldman, *The Press Effect: Politicians, Journalists, and the Stories that Shape the Political World*
Joseph T. Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication*
David Lange, et al., *Mass Media and Violence*
Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts (eds.), *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, esp. pp. 347-753

13. The Future: Problems and Prospects

- Ken Auletta, "Leviathan: How much bigger can AOL Time Warner Get?" *New Yorker*, October 29, 2001, pp. 50-56;58-61
W. Lance Bennett, *News, The Politics of Illusion*, pp.220-292
Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, pp. 352-380.
Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts (eds.), *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, pp. 891-965
Rachel Smolkin, "Tribune Tribulations," *American Journalism Review*, November 2006/January 2007, pp. 22- 31

Note: all supplementary readings have been placed on Closed Reserve in Rush Rhees Library.

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Requirements:

Each student will prepare two (2) 5 - 8 page papers following the schedule laid down below.

The topic must be chosen from the list for each period.

Each paper will count for one-quarter (25 per cent) of the grade for the course.

The exam will count 50 per cent.

Paper 1 - Deadline: February 18

Topics:- The Law of Libel

- The Impact of Opinion Polls on American News Coverage
- Changes in News Story Selection over the past Thirty Years
- The Emerging Economics of the Mass Media
- Should the "Fairness Doctrine" be reinstated?
- Government Wartime Control of the Mass Media and the War in Iraq
- The audience for news in the United States
- Do the mass media have too much freedom in the United States?
- What has 9/11 changed in media coverage?

Paper 2 - Deadline: March 31

Topics:- Concentration of Ownership in the Mass Media

- Are Newspapers Dying?
- The Treatment of Minorities in the Mass Media
- Coverage of the 2008 Primary Campaigns
- Does Pack Journalism Exist Any More?
- The role of televised debates in political campaigning
- Patterns of Media Coverage of National Politics
- Trends in political spot messages on television
- Political implications of technological innovation in the mass media
- The impact of Blogs

Papers for Political Science 217 (continued)

**CRITERIA FOR WRITING PAPERS FOR
POLITICS AND THE MASS MEDIA**

Students should do the following in these papers:

- 👉 Clearly and concisely describe the issue, problem or topic under consideration;
- 👉 Explore the reasons for the patterns (if any) being described;
- 👉 If there is a problem, tell the reader what it is and what the solution(s) might be; if there is a trend, project it; and if there are conflicting sides, outline them.

You might want to take a stand. But if you do, you must be prepared to defend it in the paper.

- 👉 If you are quoting someone or some authority, use either a footnote or a reference in the body of the text. Such references indicate that you have done research and have explored sources other than your own mind.
- 👉 Your paper should conclude with a separate page set aside for a bibliography of works or references consulted.

Note: the style and manner in which your ideas are presented are important. Clear and concise writing will be rewarded. The opposite, penalized.