Student Learning Outcomes:
Course Description and Student Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to familiarize students with the history, function and impact of media in American politics. The objectives of this course are for students to be able to:

a) Analyze the influence of mass media on political institutions and the public
b) Critically examine the concepts of objectivity, bias and false balance
c) Assess diverse perspectives on the importance of media and its role in democracies
d) Understand how the news media functioned during the 2020 election cycle

Item A will be assessed with class participation, response papers and the framing assignment
Item B will be assessed with class participation, response papers, framing assignment, “This Day in American News Media”, final paper
Item C will be assessed with participation, response papers, final paper
Item D will be assessed with participation, response papers, “This Day in American News Media” assignment, final paper

The Big Question: How Does This Class Operate?
As much as I would prefer to just host a normal class in real time online, this tends not to work. Instead, “live” sessions will be mostly for discussion and interaction AFTER you’ve done some learning and reading online. OAKS will have folders in the Content section for each class day. You need to do everything in the folder BEFORE we begin our “live” session that day.

Prior to our online class you will open the folder and:
• Watch the video lecture – I will make these as fun as possible! Some will be shorter than others.
• Do the assignments- usually reading or watching/listening to media content.
• Think about the discussion questions which will be asked in the “live” session. These will be posted to OAKS.

Sign into the “live” online session at the designated times so we can:
• Discuss the questions posed about the readings/assignments.
• Discuss what is taking place in the real world of American politics and media. THIS IS THE GOOD STUFF RIGHT HERE.
What materials are required?

*Texts:* No textbook is required! Instead, we will use a variety of digital texts, including academic journal articles, popular press articles, blog posts, podcasts etc. Everything will be posted on OAKS!

*Hardware:* A computer with good Internet access, speakers and a camera. You must have a reliable Internet connection.

### Grading Breakdown (100 points total. 10 points=One letter grade)

- Participation: 15 points
- Framing assignment: 10 points
- Response papers: 10 points each X 3= 30 points
- “This Day in American News Media” video assignment: 15 points
- News source election analysis final paper: 30 points

### Brief Explanation of Big Assignments:

**News Source Election Analysis paper:** The big “project” of this semester will be for you to choose a news source (approved by me), learn about it (ownership, history etc.) and then follow and analyze how it covers the weeks leading into and after the 2020 presidential election. Per the instructions that will be given early in the course, you will focus on analyzing a few different features of news outlets: different types of biases, how they source their information, how they frame stories etc. The purpose of this is twofold:

a) Apply the course materials to something tangible in the real world of political news
b) Learn that news sources cannot be assessed by snap judgements or singular headlines; you need to have a full understanding of the outlet in order to develop an accurate portrait of “what it’s about.”

**“The Day in American News Media”:** November 4, 2020- the day after the presidential election- is going to be a landmark day in American news media. We may not even have a declared winner at this time since many people will be voting absentee through the mail. How the news media covers this moment matters. You are going to pay particular attention to your news source that day. Each student will produce a 2-minute video on how their source covered this historic event. I will try to string together these videos to produce a full blown “class collaborative video” that documents how many different sources covered this day in American history. This is something you can take with you when the course is over. Lengthier instructions to come.

**Response papers:** Every student needs to write 3 response papers to class readings. At least two of them MUST be written prior to Thanksgiving. These are 2-3 page papers (double spaced) that react to the readings for that class period. You need to read them and turn in the response BEFORE we have a live session and discuss them- otherwise you could just regurgitate what others say on Zoom. OAKS will indicate which days you can write response papers for (some won’t make much sense). Lengthier instructions to come.

### Grading Scale for Final Grades

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<th>Score Range</th>
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Attendance Policy
Attendance is not mandatory but factors into your participation grade which is worth a decent amount given that this is a discussion-oriented class. It might be tempting to not log into live sessions because they feel less “real”, but this is a critical component of the course and I will notice who is there and who is not there.

Late Assignments, Incompletes and Extensions:
I want to be as flexible as possible during this unprecedented semester. However, there still need to be some rules in place for turning work in. There will be a 5% deduction for each 24 hours an assignment comes in late. However, if you are having a health, family, work or personal issue and need an extension, please let me know and we will talk it through. I will probably assess each request on a case-by-case basis. You should tell me if you anticipate an issue as soon as possible. I am more likely to be flexible if you tell me someone in your family is ill and you may need an extra day or two prior to the deadline rather than telling me 2 weeks after the deadline that someone was sick and you were helping them out. The latter does not strike an instructor as “being kept in the loop”.

Extra Credit:
Students will have the opportunity to earn up to 2 points of extra credit. This will likely be in the form of watching news media documentaries and/or consuming other pre-determined content and writing something short to demonstrate that you paid attention. You cannot get the extra credit until you are caught up with all the assignments. So, if you are missing, say, the framing assignment, you can’t get the extra credit points until you turn it in. Your energy should be focused on the main course work.

OAKS
OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

Recording of Classes
Class sessions will be recorded via both voice and video recording. By attending and remaining in this class, the student consents to being recorded. Recorded class sessions are for instructional use only and may not be shared with anyone who is not enrolled in the class.

Disability/SNAP Accommodations:
Any student eligible for and needing accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class or as soon as the student has been approved for services so that reasonable accommodations can be arranged.

Honor Code and Academic Integrity:
“Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.”
Incidents where the instructor determines the student’s actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive an XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php.”

**Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Interruption of Instruction**

If in-person classes are suspended, faculty will announce to their students a detailed plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and Internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools.

**I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus throughout the semester**
Course Agenda
Readings for each class will be posted on OAKS.
Most days will have readings, but some will not.

Tuesday, August 25 Introduction and Course Overview
  • Prior to first meeting: Take the “Welcome to Media and Politics” survey!
  • Aside from the “Welcome Survey”, THIS WILL BE A LIVE SESSION ONLY. We’ll go over the course material, get used to Zoom and get comfortable speaking to each other in an online format.

Thursday, August 27 The American Political System, Democracy and Trump

Tuesday, September 1 History of the Media, Modes of Communication

Thursday, September 3 Models of the Media, Ownership

Tuesday, September 8 Regulation and Press Freedom

Thursday, September 10 Gatekeeping

Tuesday, September 15 Informational Biases

Thursday, September 17 Political Bias I: How We Study It Using Content Analysis

Tuesday, September 22 Political Bias II: What Studies Show

Thursday, September 24 Political Bias III: What Studies Show II & Other Political Biases

Tuesday, September 29 The Other Side of Bias: False Balance

Thursday, October 1 Media Effects: Framing, Priming, Agenda Setting

Tuesday, October 6 This day is intentionally being left blank in case there is a hurricane and we need to re-arrange/make accommodations with the course agenda

Thursday, October 8 Elections I: Primaries

Tuesday, October 13 Elections II: Primaries 2016 and 2020
  • Framing Assignment due today

Thursday, October 15 Elections III: General Elections

Tuesday, October 20 Elections IV: General Elections 2016 Trump v. Clinton
Thursday, October 22 Political Ads

Tuesday, October 27 “Fake News”

Thursday, October 29 Institutions I: The Presidency

Tuesday, November 3- ELECTION DAY. NO CLASSES. GO VOTE!

Thursday, November 5 POST- ELECTION OPEN DISCUSSION DAY
  • I am reserving this day for an open discussing about ANYTHING YOU WANT after the election. Keep in mind, however, that we may not know the winner by the morning after because absentee/mail in ballots will take longer to count. THAT IS NORMAL. Do not let people tell you that means the election is “rigged”.

Tuesday, November 10 Institutions II: The Presidency- Trump

Thursday, November 12 Institutions III: Congress and the Supreme Court

Tuesday, November 17 Foreign Policy & The Iraq War Case Study

Thursday, November 19 Media Systems in Other Countries: China and North Korea
  • “THIS DAY IN AMERICAN NEWS MEDIA” VIDEO DUE

Tuesday, November 24 Social Media I: Elections

Thursday, November 26 THANKSGIVING. NO CLASS

Tuesday, December 1 Social Media II: Polarization and Other Effects

Thursday, December 3 Humor and Politics
  • FINAL PAPER DUE