

## Media and Politics Course Syllabus



**Course** PSCI 4321.001  
**Course Title** Media and Politics  
**Instructor** Katie Sanchez (she/her)  
**Term** Spring 2024  
  
**Meetings** Monday & Wednesday  
10:00am - 11:15am, FO 2.208

### Contact Information

Instructor: Katie Sanchez (Widner)  
Email Address: [katie.widner@utdallas.edu](mailto:katie.widner@utdallas.edu)  
Office Location: GR 3.314

Office Hours: Tuesday, 1 – 2 pm; Thursday, 1 – 2 pm; and by appointment

Other Information: Office hours will be held via MS Teams unless otherwise communicated.

### Course Description

This course will give students a background in the development of the press as a political institution and the logistics of news-making and coverage. We will examine the theoretical and actual roles played by the press in public affairs to develop understanding of current and persistent problems of press performance, such as bias, independence, manipulation by government and special interests, and the quest for profits at the expense of public service.

### Student Learning Objectives

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- To develop a critical understanding of media as a key element in the American political system.
  - To develop a critical understanding of the media portrayal of political events.
  - To develop a critical understanding of the strength and nature of media effects.
  - To be able to explain and discuss critically the topics presented in this course.
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### Required Textbooks and Materials

We will utilize two textbooks, in addition to research articles, throughout this course.

The only required textbook you must purchase for this course is *Media Politics (Fifth Edition)* by Shanto Iyengar. This book may be purchased as a hard copy or an ebook- it is available via the UTD bookstore and online.

The second textbook we will be using is *Social Media and Political Communication* by Jeremy Harris Lipschultz. It is available for **free** as an ebook via the UTD library. Chapter PDFs will be posted to eLearning for easy access.

In addition, research articles will be posted to eLearning and will also be available via the UTD library.

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## **Course Structure**

Students are responsible for doing the assigned readings, attending class, and applying course material outside of the classroom. I reserve the right to change the elements of this syllabus if students are not meeting these basic responsibilities.

Your grade for this class will be determined by the following components:

1. Attendance and Participation (10%)
2. In-Class Presentation (30%)
3. Reading Responses (3 @ 10% each for 30% total)
4. Final Paper (30%)

## **In-Class Presentation**

Giving an effective and engaging presentation is a crucial skill for learning and development. Along with other members of your group, you will be responsible to develop and give a presentation based on the “class presentation article” that your group is assigned. You will complete this assignment in conjunction with your group, and the presentation will take place in class on the day that your group is assigned. This is not an exercise in providing a detailed summary of your assigned article, but to use case studies, reports, articles, news media items, TED Talks, movies, video clips, role play, stories, or games to communicate the most interesting things you have learned from the article. You must clearly discuss how the content you present adds to the understanding of the class readings or the theories. Have fun with the topic! Peer evaluations of your performance will be conducted.

Groups will be randomly assigned. There will be 11 groups total, which means 11 presentation days. Group presentations will take place every Wednesday beginning Week 4 (February 14th). This means one group will have a slight crunch time in getting their presentation prepared. This will be taken into consideration when grading.

Guidelines for the class presentation:

1. Provide a BRIEF summary of the assigned article. This assignment is not a summary, but an interactive exercise that illustrates the theme of the week and guides a follow-up discussion through thoughtful questions. So, summarize succinctly and move on.
2. “Tell” the class what you like (agree with) most and what you dislike (disagree with)

most about the ideas in the reading material. This should also be brief.

3. You can use visual aids, play video clips, design PowerPoint slides, jokes, games, and etc. – whatever you can think of to engage the audience.

4. Time: 30-45 minutes, make sure you leave 5-10 minutes for questions.

5. If your group will use some materials (e.g. video clips) on the computer or other instruments, please come to the classroom early to set it up and test.

6. Prepare discussion questions based on the materials you present. You can either send out these questions ahead of time or post them on your PowerPoint presentation for the class to discuss.

7. Make sure to connect the article to current events, course materials, and personal experiences.

A rubric for class presentations will be uploaded to eLearning. We will discuss more about the presentations in class.

### **Attendance and Participation**

Students are expected to regularly attend class in person. Attendance counts for 10% of the total course grade. Students are allowed **four** “freebie” absences which will not impact the attendance grade. Beyond this, students are expected to submit a written notice with an approved reason to the instructor if they miss class. Otherwise, attendance points will be deducted. Please see UTD attendance guidelines for further detail.

Students are expected to participate by asking and answering questions in class, especially during their peers’ presentations. Students are expected to pay attention to the instructor and their peers and contribute to meaningful discussion.

Note: This attendance policy is not meant to be punitive. I understand situations may arise during the semester which prevent in-person attendance. In these cases, communication is key. The earlier you let me know about a problem or concern, the easier it is for me to accommodate you. My ultimate goal is your success in this course, and this attendance policy is in place to help ensure your success. However, I cannot help you if you fail to communicate your circumstances.

### **Reading Responses (3 total)**

You are responsible for completing three reading responses throughout the semester (each is worth 10 percent of the total course grade). These will be brief (around 2 pages, double-spaced) reactions to the readings for that week. Readings are assigned for the whole week, not an individual day. This being the case, responses must be turned in via the folder on eLearning before the start of Monday’s class for the corresponding week. For example, if you choose to write a reading response in reaction to the Week 4 readings, you must submit your paper to eLearning before 10:00am on Monday, February 12th. Because you have flexibility on which reading responses you decide to complete, no late responses will be accepted. Emailed responses will also not be accepted. You may choose any 3 weeks for these responses; however, **the first response must be submitted by March 4th** so that I can provide adequate feedback and make sure you are on the right track.

Guidelines for writing reading responses:

These should be your reaction to a reading, not just a summary. It is fine to provide a brief summary of what you see to be the key argument or claim, but your task is to reflect thoughtfully and critically on the assigned reading, not just summarize what you read. In other words, your reaction paper should consist of just that- your reaction. More of this will be expanded upon on the first day of class.

Some additional guidelines on what to include in the papers:

- Were you surprised by anything in the paper? The authors' findings? Their hypotheses? Their arguments?
- Do you think their argument/research is believable (or not), and why?
- What do you think are important implications (if any) their argument/research has on our understanding of important contemporary politics?
- If it is an empirical research study, do you see problems with the methodological approach?
- Do you see connections between this reading and other readings we've encountered in this course, or that you've encountered in others? If so, do you favor one article over another, and why?
- Do you see future directions the research/argument might take?

Reading Response criteria:

- Approximately 2 pages in length (double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font).
- Make it clear what chapter/article(s) you are reacting to.
- Citations are not required, but if they are utilized, they should be in APSA or Chicago format.
- No lengthy quotations.
- This response should be your own reaction to the reading(s). Avoid too much summary or paraphrasing.
- Do NOT use generative AI (e.g. Chat GPT) to complete these responses, as that is a major violation of academic honesty and UTD policy.

## **Final Paper**

Students will analyze the political content of a particular form of media through content analysis and other relevant research materials as a baseline for developing and answering a question. You can choose any sort of media to complete this assignment (e.g. newspaper articles, social media posts, or television programs) provided that you can tell a story about why it might be politically relevant.

The research paper should be 4 - 6 pages long.

In your paper, you will need to do the following:

- Consume media and collect evidence:

Make sure that your research strategy is feasible. Your evidence should come from **at least** a 4 hour sample of a show or series, 8 print/online articles, **or** 16 social media posts (more is fine here). You must content analyze your media, from which you will collect evidence, and provide support for your argument.

- Content Analysis. Content analysis is the process of observing and cataloging information from a form of communication into quantifiable terms. An example of content analysis of a television program includes: counting the number of political skits on Saturday Night Live across three decades to see if SNL relies more on political humor now than it used to; defining then counting the number of conservative or liberal comments made by characters on The Simpsons to test whether or not the show has a political slant; or timing the top stories on local versus national news as a basis for arguing that national news is more thematic than local News.

- Present a question about the media and briefly explain **why we should care** about the answer to this question: Your question should center on a research question that can be refuted. Make sure that your question is specific enough to answer effectively.

- Build evidence to answer your research question: Make sure that you provide the background information necessary to understand your question and its importance. To do so, draw upon the course readings and refer to other sources (both media stories and scholarly research) that may help you construct an informed and persuasive argument. Class readings may provide a baseline for making your argument, but you will need additional research from scholarly sources to enrich it.

- Present your conclusion and consider its limitations and implications. Tell readers why they should care about your conclusion and address potential objections. You will need to develop your research paper within the scholarly literature. Thus, you will need to incorporate scholarly articles and/or books into your paper. If you do not know how to conduct an effective search for scholarly materials, you should consult a reference librarian or me.

#### Online Resources:

- Roper Public Opinion Database ([ropercenter.cornell.edu](http://ropercenter.cornell.edu)). Provides public opinion data.
- Pew Research Center for the People and the Press ([people-press.org](http://people-press.org)). Conducts surveys about media use and public opinion. Web page includes reports.
- Center for Media and Public Affairs ([www.cmpa.com](http://www.cmpa.com)). Conducts studies of the news and entertainment media. Web page includes press releases and research reports.
- Project for Excellence in Journalism ([www.journalism.org](http://www.journalism.org)). Conducts studies of news and news coverage.
- Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania ([appcpenn.org](http://appcpenn.org)). Conducts research on political communication. Web page includes numerous reports.
- NexisUni (LEXIS-NEXIS Academic Universe). Includes an archive of television news transcripts.
- Fair ([www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org)). Website that explores and catalogs evidence of media bias.
- University of Wisconsin Advertising Project ([wiscadproject.wisc.edu](http://wiscadproject.wisc.edu)). Data on presidential

campaign advertising.

- Politifact ([politifact.org](http://politifact.org)). Factual evaluation of political statements and claims.

#### Research Paper Guidelines:

You must use at least FIVE scholarly sources to complete this paper. (This means you must cite and incorporate them within the paper.) Scholarly sources are academic works, such as peer reviewed books or journal articles. Your paper MUST include at least TWO journal articles from The American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, Journal of Politics, Political Research Quarterly, Political Behavior, Communications Research, or Political Communication. Although quality periodicals such as the National Journal or The New York Times (and the foregoing webpages) may be useful to supplement your research, they do not count toward the five-source minimum. Most other sources, including Wikipedia, are not scholarly sources. If you are unsure as to what counts as a scholarly source, feel free to ask.

The first step to writing a good paper is organization. Use an outline. If you know how information fits into your paper before you write, you will find writing to be much easier. Use headings. Headings will allow you to break up a lengthy paper into several smaller papers. This will also make writing easier, especially if you have not yet written a 4 -6 page paper in your college career.

#### Paper Guidelines:

1. The paper must be typed and double-spaced in 12-point font (Times New Roman). Margins must be around 1.25 inches.
  2. You may use either APSA or Chicago citation styles.
  3. All papers must include a title page. A title page contains the following information: The title of the assignment, your name, the class, and the date.
  4. The title page, references, or endnotes do not count toward the paper's page total.
  5. You must submit your assignment via the dropbox on eLearning **no later than** 11:59pm on May 6th. No emailed papers will be accepted.
  6. Late work will not be accepted without an approved excuse.
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## Course Schedule

Week	Date	Book Chapter	Article	Presentation Group
1	Week of Jan 22	Syllabus	NA	NA
2	Week of Jan 29	“Image is Everything” Iyengar Ch 1	Brunell, Thomas L., and Sarah P. Maxwell. “How Partisanship Affected Public Reaction to Potential Treatments for COVID-19.” <i>World medical and health policy</i> 12, no. 4 (2020): 482–486.	NA
3	Week of Feb 5	“The Press & The Democratic Process” Iyengar Ch 2	MARTIN, GREGORY J., and JOSHUA McCRAIN. “Local News and National Politics.” <i>The American political science review</i> 113, no. 2 (2019): 372–384.	NA
4	Week of Feb 12	“The Media Marketplace” Iyengar Ch 3	Shin, Jieun, Lian Jian, Kevin Driscoll, and François Bar. “Political Rumoring on Twitter during the 2012 US Presidential Election: Rumor Diffusion and Correction.” <i>New media &amp; society</i> 19, no. 8 (2017): 1214–1235.	1
5	Week of Feb 19	“Reporters, Official Sources, and Decline of Adversarial Journalism” Iyengar Ch 4	CLAYMAN, STEVEN E., MARC N. ELLIOTT, JOHN HERITAGE, and LAURIE L. MCDONALD. “Historical Trends in Questioning Presidents, 1953-2000.” <i>Presidential studies quarterly</i> 36, no. 4 (2006): 561–583.	2
6	Week of Feb 26	“New Media, New Forms of Communication” Iyengar Ch 5	Kreiss, Daniel, and SHANNON C. MCGREGOR. “Technology Firms Shape Political Communication: The Work of Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter, and Google With Campaigns During the 2016 U.S. Presidential Cycle.” <i>Political communication</i> 35, no. 2 (2018):	3

			155–177.	
7	Week of March 4	“Campaigning Through the Media”  Iyengar Ch 6	Bradshaw, Samantha, Philip N. Howard, Bence Kollanyi, and Lisa-Maria Neudert. “Sourcing and Automation of Political News and Information over Social Media in the United States, 2016-2018.” <i>Political communication</i> 37, no. 2 (2020): 173–193.	4
8	Week of March 11	Spring Break	Spring Break	
9	Week of March 18	“Campaigns That Matter”  Iyengar Ch 7	Bossetta, Michael. “The Digital Architectures of Social Media: Comparing Political Campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 U.S. Election.” <i>Journalism &amp; mass communication quarterly</i> 95, no. 2 (2018): 471–496.	5
10	Week of March 25	“News and Public Opinion”  Iyengar Ch 8	Wlezien, Christopher. “News and Public Opinion: Which Comes First?” <i>The Journal of politics</i> (2023).	6
11	Week of April 1	“Going Public”  Iyengar Ch 9	Christenson, Dino P., Sarah E. Kreps, and Douglas L. Kriner. “Contemporary Presidency: Going Public in an Era of Social Media: Tweets, Corrections, and Public Opinion.” <i>Presidential studies quarterly</i> 51, no. 1 (2021): 151–165.	7
12	Week of April 8	“Social Media Communication Theories”  Lipschultz Ch 2	Cook, Timothy E. “The News Media as a Political Institution: Looking Backward and Looking Forward.” <i>Political communication</i> 23, no. 2 (2006): 159–171.	8
13	Week of April 15	“Political and Social Media Communication Methods”	Druckman, James N. “Priming the Vote: Campaign Effects in a U.S. Senate Election.” <i>Political psychology</i> 25, no. 4 (2004):	9

		Lipschultz Ch 3	577–594.	
14	Week of April 22	“Developing Meaningful Political Communication Questions”  Lipschultz Ch 4	PETERSEN, MICHAEL BANG, MATHIAS OSMUNDTSEN, and KEVIN ARCENEUX. “The ‘Need for Chaos’ and Motivations to Share Hostile Political Rumors.” <i>The American political science review</i> 117, no. 4 (2023): 1486–1505.	10
15	Week of April 29	“Propaganda and Social Media Persuasion”  Lipschultz Ch 6	Anderson, James, and Amie D. Kincaid. “Media Subservience and Satirical Subversiveness: The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, The Propaganda Model and the Paradox of Parody.” <i>Critical studies in media communication</i> 30, no. 3 (2013): 171–188.	11
16	May 6	Final Papers due 11:59pm		

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### Grading Scale

Final course grades will be based on total points earned throughout the course.

A+	97+	B+	87 – 89	C+	77 – 79	D+	67 – 69
A	94 – 96	B	84 – 86	C	74 – 76	D	64 – 66
A-	90 – 93	B-	80 – 83	C-	70 – 73	D-	60 – 63

### Grading Policy

Grades in this course are weighted based upon their importance to your overall class grade. The chart below provides the assignment’s value, along with a space for you to track your grade in the course (see example in first row). Sum the points in the Calculated Total column to attain your grade in the course, and enter it into the Total cell (see Grading Scale above for letter grade).

Assignment	Weight	Your Grade	Calculated Total
<b>Example</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>.10 x 90 = 9</b>
Reading Responses (3 @ 10% each)	30%		.30 x ____ = ____
In- Class Presentation	30%		.30 x ____ = ____
Final Paper	30%		.30 x ____ = ____
Attendance/Participation	10%		.10 x ____ = ____
		Total =	

## Course Policies

### *Communication*

- Emails and MS Teams messages must have the course name and number (GOVT 2305) in the subject line.
- Emails and MS Teams messages will be responded to within 48 hours. If you do not receive a response within that time frame, please forward the original email to me (katie.widner@utdallas.edu) ... it is likely your email was simply overlooked.
- For more details, please visit the Student eLearning Tutorials webpage for video demonstrations on eLearning tools.

### *Late Work*

Late work is not accepted without an approved excuse. If you have outstanding circumstances, please reach out to me and we can work something out. The earlier I know about something, the easier it is for me to make accommodations.

### *Extra Credit*

Extra credit assignments may be offered at the professor's discretion.

### *Class Participation*

Engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in the lectures and readings is essential to your success as a student, and our success as a class. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

### *Classroom Citizenship*

This class is a great opportunity to practice engaging politically with people from diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and opinions. Democracy cannot work if we are unwilling to listen to one another or unable to exchange ideas respectfully. This course will cover some topics that may prove controversial. It is incumbent upon each and every one of us to maintain civil discourse in the classroom. If at any time you do not feel this standard is being upheld, come talk to me.

### *Technical Requirements*

In addition to a confident level of computer and Internet literacy, certain minimum technical requirements must be met to enable a successful learning experience. Please review the important technical requirements on the Getting Started with eLearning webpage.

### *Course Access and Navigation*

This course can be accessed using your UT Dallas NetID account on the eLearning website. Please see the course access and navigation section of the Getting Started with eLearning webpage for more information. To become familiar with the eLearning tool, please see the Student eLearning Tutorials webpage. UT Dallas provides eLearning technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The eLearning Support Center includes a toll-free telephone number for immediate assistance (1-866-588-3192), email request service, and an online chat service. This course can also be accessed using your university email and chosen password on the Top Hat website. Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time please contact their Support Team directly by way of email ([support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com)), the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491. Specific user information may be required by their technical support team when troubleshooting issues.

### *Server Unavailability or Other Technical Difficulties*

The University is committed to providing a reliable learning management system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time sensitive assessment activity, the instructor will provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation. Students should immediately report any problems to the instructor and also contact the online eLearning Help Desk. The instructor and the eLearning Help Desk will work with the student to resolve any issues at the earliest possible time.

### *Student Accommodations*

It is the policy and practice of The University of Texas at Dallas to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. However, written notification from the AccessAbility Resource Center (ARC) is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please discuss it with me and allow one-week advance notice. Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact ARC for a confidential discussion. ARC is located in the Administration Building, AD 2.224. They can be reached by phone at 972-883-2098, or by email at [studentaccess@utdallas.edu](mailto:studentaccess@utdallas.edu).

### *Comet Creed*

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same: “As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.” Academic Support Resources The information contained in the following link lists the University’s academic support resources for all students. Please go to Academic Support Resources webpage for these policies. UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to UT Dallas Syllabus Policies webpage for these policies. The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.

### *Other Policies*

<b>Academic Support Resources</b>	<i>The information contained in the following link lists the University’s academic support resources for all students. Please go to <a href="http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources">http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources</a>.</i>
<b>UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures</b>	<i>The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please review the sections regarding the <a href="#">credit/no credit</a> grading option and withdrawal from class. Please go to <a href="http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies">http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies</a> for these policies.</i>

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