

Politics and the Media

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Political Science

Tuesday and Friday: 12.30 – 2.10

Office Hours: 2.30 – 4.00

Social Science 1032

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1. Course Description:

We are today everywhere inundated with bullshit: “fake news,” spin, disinformation, and propaganda abound. Unsurprisingly, news media enjoys record low public trust, while politicians opens attack the press as the “enemy of the people.” In this political climate, being able to discern fact from fiction, and truth within spin, is more vital than ever to preserving democratic life. Recently, scholars have begun to identify these new threats and how to counter them. In this course, we will explore the threats posed by corporate media, propaganda machines, and ways to counter their outsized influence on our politics.

2. Course Objectives:

Completion of this course will provide a survey of political science scholarship on the political role of media in the United States. In so doing, it will equip you with a theoretical and conceptual basis for analyzing competing claims to truth. Completion will build media literacy, as well as skills such as critical reading, analytical writing, and collaborative discussion.

3. Required Texts

All texts are available on Perusall, accessible via Moodle.

4. Grading (see below for details):

Attendance & Class Participation: 25%.

Perusall Annotation: 25%

In-Class Response Papers: 25%

Final Paper: 25%

5. Attendance and Class Participation:

This class will be a discussion-driven exploration of our topics of study. Your attendance and participation is essential to the success of this experiment in learning. Attendance means being present in class, having read the assigned course materials that you also have with you to reference. Participation means verbal contributions to class discussion that refers us to a passage in the text,

a concept or idea that is under discussion, and/or a question regarding the aforementioned. You are expected to participate every class.

Absences

I know 18 - 22 year olds are not the most health conscious cohort - at least I wasn't at your age. However, now is the time to err on the side of caution. If you have a cough, runny nose, sore throat, just a tickle in your throat, "allergies," or just feel "off," then **STAY HOME and GET TESTED**. You will **NOT** be penalized for prioritizing the health and wellness of your peers.

6. Perusall Annotations:

Reading the assigned course materials is essential to a successful course. To this end, you are required to do the readings on Perusall, where you are expected to make at least four (4) *substantive annotations* per reading. **Perusall annotations a due on the night before class, by 8pm.** A substantive annotation can take many forms:

A) Asks a deep question, i.e., "When X says 'y,' do they they mean 'x' or 'z'. If 'x,' then I think that 'a,b,c' follows. If 'z,' then I think that 'd,e,f' follows."

Not: "What does this mean?"

B) Makes a deep connection to a previous text or author, i.e., "This reminds me of X, where they argue 'a,b,c,' only here the claim is 'x,y,z.' I think this formulation is better because '1,2,3.'"

Not: "This reminds me of 'x'."

C) Poses a hypothetical reply to a passage informed by previous readings or the text's on premises, i.e., "When X claims 'a,b,c,' they do so on the basis of positing '1,' but if we instead take '2' to be our beginning premise, then we see that 'd,e,f' follows, which better explains the phenomenon X theorizes."

Not: "But what about 'x'?"

D) Extends the argument, i.e., "When X argues 'a,b,c,' they do so by addressing phenomenon no. 1. If we apply this argument to phenomenon no. 2, then we can see how 'a,b,c' provides a way of understanding 'x,y,z' about it that otherwise we would not notice or appreciate."

Not: "This is old and dated and doesn't apply to our world anymore."

E) Puts a complex and possibly unclear portion of the argument in more accessible language, i.e., "When X says, 'a,b,c,' they are saying 'a1,b1,c1.'"

Not: "'a' means 'a'."

7. Writing Assignments:

At the start of each Tuesday class, you will be asked to write a response paper to the reading assigned for that day. Please bring paper and pen with which to write. These will be graded on a scale of 1 – 5, with anything less than a 4 being unsatisfactory. A satisfactory response engages the text in meaningful ways by drawing out its arguments, challenging or extending its premises. What does the reading get right or wrong, and why? How does the rightness or wrongness of the

argument affect possible policy or political decisions? What might correcting the wrongness or extending/applying the rightness do for the argument, and for us as citizens?

8. Final Paper Critical Construction of an Original Argument

The objective of the final paper assignment is to provide you with the opportunity to construct an original argument using the materials from this course. The final written assignment will be approximately 5 – 7 double-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font, and **margins justified** pages. Papers either over or under this range will not receive full consideration. The goal of this essay is to critically construct an original argument informed by engagement with readings in the class. Specific paper prompts will be released in advance.

9. Academic Integrity:

Simply: *do not* plagiarize. If there are any questions whatsoever about the proper way to cite a source, please consult me or the resources provided by the Learning Center. Plagiarism will lead to automatic failure of the course and will be referred to the College administration for additional sanction.

Learning Center Resources:

Political Science Tutor: Sophia Dimopoulos.
You can sign-up for tutoring through the course Moodle page.

Additional resources are available on the Learning Center webpage:
<https://www.purchase.edu/offices/learning-center/handouts-and-links/>

10. Unwavering Expectations for Respectful Discourse and Conduct:

Under no circumstances will disrespectful discourse or conduct be welcome in our classroom. We will treat one another with respect, patience, and understanding. Learning inherently involves the risk of allowing knowledge to change your life, and this requires courage. We will all exercise an unwavering commitment to encouraging one another in this process.

Mask Policy

Not all masks are created equal.

TIME IT TAKES TO TRANSMIT AN INFECTIOUS DOSE OF COVID-19

PERSON NOT INFECTED IS WEARING

	NOTHING	CLOTH MASK	SURGICAL MASK	N95 MASK
PERSON INFECTED IS WEARING NOTHING	15 minutes	20 minutes	30 minutes	2.5 hours
CLOTH MASK	20 minutes	27 minutes	40 minutes	3.3 hours
SURGICAL MASK	30 minutes	40 minutes	1 hour	5 hours
N95 MASK	2.5 hours	3.3 hours	5 hours	25 hours

The best line of defense we have against transmission of COVID-19 is proper masking. To this end, I will ask that the freely-provided N-95 masks be properly worn at all times, fully covering nose and mouth, all semester.

Please consult this video for how to properly wear an N-95 mask:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNkdHbYu6Mw>

There will be no food or drinks allowed in class. You may step out of the classroom if necessary.

11. Accessibility Statement:

The Office of Disability Resources collaborates directly with students who identify documented disabilities to create accommodation plans, including testing accommodations, in order for students to access course content and validly demonstrate learning. For those students who may require accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Resources as soon as possible, 914-251-6035, ODR@purchase.edu (Student Services Building, #316A), www.purchase.edu/odr.

12. Schedule:

I. Corporate Media: The Political Economy of Propaganda

Week One: Manufacturing Consent – Introducing the model and the first filter

Tuesday, August 30, 2022:

Introducing the course. Introducing the Propaganda Model.

Friday, September 2, 2022: Discussion of Reading.

Reading:

- *Manufacturing Consent*, pp. 1 – 2.
- 1.1. SIZE, OWNERSHIP, AND PROFIT ORIENTATION OF THE MASS MEDIA: THE FIRST FILTER, pp. 3 – 13.

Week Two: Manufacturing Consent: the second filter & the third filter

Tuesday, September 6, 2022: Discussion of Reading

Reading (12 pages):

- 1.2. THE ADVERTISING LICENSE TO DO BUSINESS: THE SECOND FILTER, pp. 14 – 18.
- 1.3. SOURCING MASS-MEDIA NEWS: THE THIRD FILTER, pp. 18 – 26.

Friday, September 9, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Three: No Class

Tuesday, September 13, 2022, Friday, September 16, 2022:

Week Four: Manufacturing Consent: the fourth filter & fifth filter

Tuesday, September 20, 2022: Discussion of Reading

Reading (10 pages):

- 1.4. FLAK AND THE ENFORCERS: THE FOURTH FILTER, pp. 26 – 29.
- 1.5. ANTICOMMUNISM AS A CONTROL MECHANISM, pp. 29 – 31.
- 1.6. DICHOTOMIZATION AND PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS, pp. 32 – 36.

Friday, September 23, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Five: Manufacturing Consent: Unworthy v. Worthy Victims.

Tuesday, September 27, 2022: Discussion of Reading

Reading:

- Judith Butler, *Frames of War*, selections.

Friday, September 30, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

II. Political Propaganda:
The Case of the US Right-Wing Media Ecosystem

Week Six: *First Paper Due Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2022 by 11.59pm*

Tuesday, October 4, 2022: Discussion of Reading

Reading (15 pages):

- C. Thi Nguyen, “Polarization or Propaganda?” *Boston Review*.

Friday, October 7, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Seven

Tuesday, October 11, 2022: Discussion of Reading

Reading (11 pages):

- Bauer, A.J. et. al, “What is Fox News? Partisan Journalism, Misinformation, and the Problem of Classification,” *Electronic News*, vol. 16, 1 (2021): pp. 18-29.

Friday, October 14, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Eight

Tuesday, October 18, 2022: Discussion of Reading

Reading (17 pages):

- Mills, Colleen E. 2017. “Framing Ferguson: Fox News and the construction of US racism” *Race & Class*, vol. 58, 4: pp. 39-56.

Friday, October 21, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Nine

Tuesday, October 25, 2022: Discussion of Reading

Reading (18 pages):

- Meirick, Patrick C. "Motivated Misperception? Party, Education, Partisan News, and Belief in 'Death Panels'," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 2012: 90(1), pp. 39– 57.

Friday, October 28, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Ten

Tuesday, November 1, 2022: Discussion of Reading

Reading (11 pages):

- Jones, Jeffery P. "Fox & Friends: Political Talk" in *How to Watch Television*, 2nd Ed. Edited by Ethan Thompson and Jason Mittell (New York: NYU Press, 2020). Friday, November 4, 2022

Friday, November 4, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Eleven

Tuesday, November 8, 2022: Election Day, No Class.

Reading (13 pages):

- Stan, Adele. "All Politics is Local: Sinclair News conquers America for Trump, one living room at a time," *The Baffler*, No. 37 (Winter 2017), pp. 72-83.

Friday, November 11, 2022: Discussion of Reading.

III. Countering Propaganda

Week Twelve

Tuesday, November 15, 2022: Discussion of Reading

Reading (29 pages):

- Wood, T., & Porter, E. (2018). "The Elusive Backfire Effect: Mass Attitudes' Steadfast Factual Adherence." *Political Behavior*. doi:10.1007/s11109-018-9443-y

Friday, November 18, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Thirteen

Tuesday, November 22, 2022

Reading (32 pages):

- Broockman, David and Joshua Kalla. "The manifold effects of partisan media on viewers' beliefs and attitudes: A field experiment with Fox News viewers."

Friday, November 25, 2022: No Class, Indigenous Peoples Day Break.

Week Fourteen

Tuesday, November 29, 2022:

Reading:

- McChesney, Robert. "Welcome to Havana, Mr. Corleone: Issues of Media Ownership and Control," *Pacific Journalism Review* 10 (2) 2004: 20 - 31.

Friday, December 2, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Fifteen

Tuesday, December 6, 2022: Discussion of Reading.

Reading:

- Farkas, Johan, and Christina Neumayer. "Disguised propaganda from digital to social media." *Second International Handbook of Internet Research* (2020): 707-723.

Friday, December 9, 2022: Discussion of Reading, Cont.

Week Sixteen

Tuesday, December 13, 2022: Final Paper Due