

JOMC 244
Talk Politics: An Introduction to Political Communication
Fall 2015
Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30am-10:45 am
Carroll 305/Freedom Forum

Instructor: Suzannah Evans
E-mail: sdevans@live.unc.edu

Office: 389 Carroll Hall
Hours: Tuesdays 11-1 p.m.
and by appointment

This course provides a detailed overview of political communication in the United States. Our task is threefold: to analyze the actors, technologies, and forms of communication that influence public debate. We focus closely on the processes of political communication, with an eye to how the state, press, political parties, civil society organizations, social movements, campaigns, and the public interact to shape public life and produce political culture. We consider the social and technological contexts that shape the production, distribution, and reception of political communication. At the same time, we define ‘political communication’ broadly to encompass the vast range of symbolic political expression, from political advertisements to protest events.

We will use historic examples and current examples from the 2016 presidential primary campaign cycle in order to study the role of communication in the democratic process. Throughout the semester we will analyze campaigns and governance through the lens of the theories and concepts that we encounter in interdisciplinary readings that span the fields of communication, political science, and sociology.

By the end of this semester, you should have a strong grasp of how political communication functions in the United States and what challenges face political candidates, the news media, civil society actors, and citizens in their roles as political actors.

Grades

Participation: 60%

Final paper and presentation: 40%

Course Requirements

Participation

This course is based on active discussion and is run as a seminar. You are expected to come to class having completed the readings. In addition, you have a more structured participation assignment:

“Opening” a text for class discussion: due date TBD

Twice during the course, you will “open” a text for class discussion. This entails a more formal five to seven minute presentation that summarizes the key arguments of a reading. In addition, you will pose questions to facilitate class discussion.

Half of your participation grade will be based on your work as a discussion leader. The other half will be based on your work as a discussion participant, and your attendance and timeliness to class will be considered here.

Halfway through the semester, you will evaluate your participation so far in a one-page essay. I’ll respond with feedback so you can gauge where you are with your participation grade. Remember, an A is earned; it is not given.

Final Paper and Presentation

You will produce a 6-8 page final paper and deliver a 5-10 minute presentation on a topic related to political communication. You have two options. You may either produce an in-depth literature review of scholarly work on a political communication topic. For example, if you choose “negative advertising,” your task is to summarize the body of scholarly research relating to the effectiveness and consequences of negative advertising. Your second option is to produce a detailed case study of some communication element of the current presidential primary campaign. It may focus on one candidate’s media strategy or an overarching issue, such as “How do Republicans use social media to reach their base?” or “What role has Super PAC money played in advertising during the primary race so far?”

The strongest papers and presentations will advance an original argument that draws on class readings but also presents evidence from outside readings.

Final papers are due on the date of our final exam, which is **8 am on Tuesday, December 8**. You must bring a hard copy to the exam date, which is when we will hold final presentations. E-mailed copies will not be accepted unless we have extreme weather and the university is closed. No late papers will be accepted. You may use any citation style (APA, Chicago, etc.) as long as you are consistent. You must include a properly-crafted reference list with your final paper. While there is no specific number of sources you must use in your final paper, a good paper will have at least 10.

Resources

Many of the readings are located on Sakai for you to download. Several of the books are available online through UNC Library. You should only have to buy one book (Timothy E. Cook’s *Governing With the News*).

The Honor Code

You know what this is. If you have questions about the Honor Code, please see me or read more at <http://honor.unc.edu>.

Laptops and cell phones

Laptops are permitted in class; however, I reserve the right to ask you to close your laptops during presentations or class discussions. You are expected to be using your laptop only to take notes for class. Cell phones should be set on silent or turned off and left in your backpack, please.

Office hours

My walk-in hours are Tuesday 11-1 p.m. in Carroll 389 (third floor directly above the Park Library). You are also welcome to make an appointment by email at least two days in advance. You may also email me with questions. **Please put “JOMC 244” and something about your question in the email subject heading.** Example: “JOMC 244: Final paper question.” I will try to answer questions by email within 24-48 hours of receipt. You should not plan on getting an email answer in less than 24 hours! So try not to leave it until an hour before your paper is due.

Diversity

The University’s policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination as outlined in the 2012-2013 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/intro.html>. In summary, UNC does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression or disabilities.

Special Accommodations

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>. If you need assistance or services from the Academic Success Program for Students with LD/ADHD please contact them at 919-962-7227 or <http://www.unc.edu/asp/>.

Please note: If you require special accommodations related to your final paper or presentation, ***you must inform me in advance of the due date.*** You should contact me about this as early in the semester as possible so we can work on an appropriate plan for you. After the due date, no special accommodations can be made.

Grade scale

Final grades will be based on the following scale.

- A = 93-100
- A- = 90-92
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 83-86
- B- = 80-82
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 73-76
- C- = 70-72
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 63-66
- D- = 60-62
- F = 59 or below

Grades are not negotiable and will not be “rounded up.”

ACCREDITATION

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: <http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on:

- demonstrating an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- understanding concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- thinking critically, creatively and independently.

Class schedule

Tuesday, August 18

Introduction to the course

Thursday, August 20

Jurgen Habermas (1991). "The Public Sphere." In Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds. *Rethinking Popular Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Tuesday, August 25

W. Russell Neuman, Bruce Bimber, and Matthew Hindman. (2010). "The Internet and Four Dimensions of Citizenship." *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and Media*. Available online at: http://www.wrneuman.com/nav_pub_92_275693743.pdf

Thursday, August 27

Lance Bennett (1980). Myth, ritual, and political control. *Journal of Communication*, 30(4), 166-179.

Tuesday, Sept. 1

Samuel Popkin, *The Candidate*, prologue and chapter 1

Thursday, Sept. 3

Popkin, chapters 2 & 3

Tuesday, Sept. 8: Candidate discussion day

Thursday, Sept. 10

Rasmus Neilson, chapters 1 & 2 (Available online through UNC Library)

Tuesday, Sept. 15

Neilson, chapters 3 and 4

Thursday, Sept. 17

Daniel Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*, chapter 1 (Available online through UNC library)

Tuesday, Sept. 22

Coleman & Wu, chapters 1 & 2 (Available on Sakai)

Thursday, Sept. 24

Coleman & Wu, chapters 6 & 7

Tuesday, Sept. 29

Coleman & Wu, chapter 11

Thursday, Oct. 1: Candidate discussion day

Tuesday, Oct. 6

Kevin Barnhurst. (2003). "The Makers of Meaning: National Public Radio and the New Long Journalism." *Political Communication*, 20(1): 1-22.

Thursday, Oct. 8 Note: Class will be held in Carroll 253 today!

Sarah Allen Gershon. (2012). Press Secretaries, Journalists, and Editors: Shaping Local Congressional News Coverage. *Political Communication* 29(2): 160-183.

Tuesday, Oct. 13

No reading assignment. We'll watch a section of "The War Room," a 1993 documentary on the Bill Clinton campaign, and discuss.

Assignment: Turn in a one-page essay evaluating your participation in the class so far.

Thursday, Oct. 15: Fall Break

Tuesday, Oct. 20

Shanto Iyengar and Jennifer A. McGrady. "Advertising Strategy." In. *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*. Available online at:
<http://pcl.stanford.edu/common/docs/research/iyengar/2007/mp- excerpt.pdf>

Travis N. Ridout, Michael Franz, Kenneth M. Goldstein, and William J. Feltus, (2012). "Separation by Television Program: Understanding the Targeting of Political Advertising in Presidential Elections." *Political Communication* 29(1): 1-23.

Thursday, Oct. 22

Guest speaker: Joe Cabosky

Tuesday, Oct. 27

Sarah Sobieraj. (2010). "Reporting Conventions: Journalists, Activists, and the Thorny Struggle for Political Visibility." *Social Problems* 57(4): 505-528.

Gamson, W. A., & Wolfsfeld, G. (1993). Movements and media as interacting systems. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 114-125.

Thursday, Oct. 29

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 739-768.

Tuesday, Nov. 3

Walker, *Grassroots for Hire*, chapter 1

Thursday, Nov. 5

Walker, *Grassroots for Hire*, chapters 5 & 6

Tuesday, Nov. 10

Assignment: Come to class prepared to discuss your final paper idea.

Thursday, Nov. 12: Candidate discussion day

Tuesday, Nov. 17

Cook, *Governing With the News*, chapters 1 & 2

Thursday, Nov. 19

Cook, chapters 4 & 5

Tuesday, Nov. 24

Cook, chapters 6 & 7

Thursday, Nov. 26: Thanksgiving

Tuesday, Dec. 1: Last candidate discussion day and class wrap-up

Exam date/Final presentation and paper due: Tuesday, Dec. 8 at 8 am.