

JOMC 244
Talk Politics: An Introduction to Political Communication
Fall 2013

Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30am-10:45am, Carroll 340/340A

Course Website: <http://talkingpoliticsjomc.wordpress.com/>

Professor: Daniel Kreiss

E-mail: dkreiss@email.unc.edu

Phone: 415.238.6924 (mobile)

Twitter: @kreissdaniel

Office: 377 Carroll Hall

Hours: 8:30am-9:30 am, T/Th
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 together constitute 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.

The 2012 campaign cycle and the president's second term provides us with cases for the study of the role of communication in the democratic process and the workings of the central institutions that organize political debate. 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. We will seek to evaluate and rework these theories through our close observation of governmental processes as they unfold.

Readings

There are four required books for this class, in addition to readings that will be made available on Sakai.

Jeffrey Alexander. *The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2010.

Timothy Cook. (1998). *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Dave Karpf. (2012). *The MoveOn Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ronald N. Jacobs and Eleanor Townley. (2011). *The Space of Opinion: Media Intellectuals and the Public Sphere*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Grades

Participation: 20%

Blog assignments: 40%

Final paper and presentation: 40%

Course Requirements

Participation

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

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

At some point in 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.* You can sign-up to open a reading on Sakai.

Weekly Writing Assignments

You are responsible for weekly blog writing on any topic covered in the course. You are responsible for a total of **6 posts** over the course of the semester. Posts must be completed by 5:00pm on the Friday of the week that you want the post to count for. **Three of these posts must be completed by the midterm, and three by the final.** You should add your posts directly to the class WordPress site. If you do not feel comfortable posting your writing in a public forum, you are free to email me your weekly post instead.

These posts should provide theoretically-informed analysis, interpretation, or original reporting/research about political communication, defined broadly. The strongest posts will connect with the readings in the class and academic literature, and consider some aspect of campaigning or governance. For example, if you write about how the Romney campaign used Twitter, you should search for and summarize the academic literature that addresses how campaigns or other political actors use social media. You do not have to commit to any one topic for the semester, although you are encouraged to tie posts into the weekly readings.

These posts should offer substantive and detailed analysis. You will be evaluated based on the quality of each post. Your work is expected to be part of the wider discussion of political processes taking shape online, so I expect these posts to link to and engage with other online venues (unless you email me your posts). You are free to write using your own original voice (i.e.: adopt a partisan or committed viewpoint) or take the position of a professional journalist.

Major domains of campaign and governance activity that are appropriate as writing topics include: policy making, issues, field campaigns, new and social media, advertising/marketing/

public relations, campaign infrastructure, political parties, social movements, civil society and nonprofit organizations, professional media coverage, rhetoric, new media, and governance.

Final Paper and Presentation

You will produce a short 5-8 page final paper and deliver a 5-10 minute presentation on a topic related to political communication. The paper and presentation should be organized as an in-depth literature review of scholarly work on your 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. The strongest papers and presentations will advance an original argument in relation to that body of work. In the example above, what have scholars not asked about negative advertising? Based on the research findings, should we regulate the use of negative advertising in political campaigns? Your regular blog posts can become part of your final paper (although this is entirely optional).

Resources

On Sakai and the course Website there is a list of blogs that do a good job of bridging journalism and scholarly research, as well as resources for journalists and journals with scholarly work on political communication. As students, you have access to all of these resources.

The Honor Code

The Honor Code is in effect at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. If you have questions about the Honor Code, please see me or read more at <http://honor.unc.edu>.

Course Schedule

Part One: Perspectives on Democracy and Political Communication

August 20th

Introduction to the course

The Public Sphere

August 22nd

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

August 27th

Jacobs and Townsley, Chapters 1 & 3

August 29th

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

Part Two: Campaigning and Political Communication

Campaigns and Culture

September 3rd

Guest Lecture

Laura Meadows, Ph.D. Candidate, School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Readings to be announced

September 5th

Alexander, Preface, Prologue, and Chapter 1

September 10th

Alexander, Chapter 2 & Note on Concept and Method

September 12th

Alexander, Chapters 5 & 6

Field Campaigning

September 17th

Alexander, Chapter 3

September 19th

Nielsen, *Ground Wars*, Chapters 1 and 2

New Media Campaigning

September 24th

Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*, Chapter 1

September 26th

Daniel Kreiss. (2012). "Acting in the Public Sphere: the 2008 Obama Campaign's Strategic Use of New Media to Shape Narratives of the Presidential Race." *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts, and Change* 33.

Campaign Advertising

October 1st

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.

October 3rd

Daniel Kreiss and Lisa Barnard, "A Research Agenda for the Effects of Online Political Advertising: Surveying Campaign Practice, 2000-2012." *International Journal of Communication*, forthcoming.

Campaigns and the Press

October 8th

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

Joan Didion. (October 27, 1988). "Insider Baseball." *The New York Review of Books*. Available online at: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1988/oct/27/insider-baseball/?page=1>

October 10th

Case Study: The 2012 Campaign

Catherine Bracy. 2012, November 30. "My Experience Leading the Obama Campaign's Tech Field Office." *Braceland*. Available online at: <http://cbracy.tumblr.com/post/36921516103/my-experience-leading-the-obama-campaigns-tech-field>

Sasha Issenberg, December 19, 2012. "The Definitive Story of How President Obama Mined Voter Data to Win a Second Term." *MIT Technology Review*. Available online at: <http://www.technologyreview.com/featuredstory/509026/how-obamas-team-used-big-data-to-rally-voters/>

Kreiss and Welch, "Controlling the Message in a Networked Age."

Part Three: Political Communication Processes

The Institutional Press as a Political Actor

October 15th

Cook, Chapters 1, 2 and 3

October 17th

Fall Break, No Class

October 22nd

Cook, Chapters 4, and 5

October 24th

Cook, Chapter 6

October 29th

Cook, Chapter 7

The Production of Political Communication

October 31st

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

November 5th

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

November 7th

Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin. (2011). "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(1), 25-43.

November 12th

Jacobs and Townsley, Chapters 4 & 5

November 14th

Jacobs and Townsley, Chapters 6 & 8

Part Four: New Frontiers in Political Communication

November 19th

Karpf, *The MoveOn Effect*, Read the Introduction and Chapters 2 and 3

Assignment:

Come to class prepared to discuss your topic for your final research project/presentation.

November 21st

Karpf, *The MoveOn Effect*, Chapters 6 and 7

November 26th

Michael Schudson, "Political Observatories, Databases, and News in the Emerging Ecology of Public Information." *Daedalus*, Spring 2011. Available online at: <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/daed.2010.139.2.100>

November 28th

Thanksgiving Holiday

December 3rd

Siva Vaidhyanathan. (2011). *The Googleization of Everything (And Why We Should Worry)*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Read chapter one online at: <http://www.ucpress.edu/excerpt.php?isbn=9780520258822&ref=nf>

Tuesday, December 10th

8:00 a.m. Final Project Presentations