Political Science 411  
PUBLIC OPINION & MEDIA  
Spring 2004

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2:30-4:00, Wednesday 2:00-3:00, and by appointment

Course Description  
This course will examine public opinion, the mass media, and how they interact to shape contemporary American democracy. With public opinion, we will explore: where it comes from, how it is measured, what people think, how it influences government and vice-versa. We will likewise explore how the mass media covers modern politics, what biases are involved in this coverage, and how this interacts with public opinion to influence American elections and governance.

Readings  
*Public Opinion*, by Carroll Glynn, Susan Herbst, Garret O’Keefe, and Robert Shapiro  
*The Press Effect* by Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman  
Coursepack, available from Sir Speedy (readings in coursepack denoted by *)  
The New York Times or The Washington Post  
Media viewing: Due to the nature of the course, it is important that in addition to reading a daily paper you watch television news and explore politically-oriented websites. Pay attention to what gets covered, how it gets covered, and what the differences are across media outlets.

In order to do well in this class, it is essential that you do the assigned readings prior to the class periods during which they will be covered. Class lectures and discussions will assume you already have knowledge of the materials covered in the readings.

Participation  
As this is a seminar, class participation is an integral part of the class. At minimum, this means good attendance. Students are also expected to be attentive during lectures and to ask questions and contribute comments to class discussions. You should come to each class having read the required assignment and prepared to discuss and comment upon the issues raised by the readings. It is also your responsibility to remain abreast of current events in American politics, especially as they apply to public opinion and the media, and be prepared to discuss these events in class. If you want to receive an A for participation, you need to 1) contribute regularly to class discussions, and; 2) keep abreast of assigned readings and current events.
Student Learning Outcomes
By the end of this course, students should be able to…
1) Analyze news reports for a variety of biases
2) Apply knowledge of mass media to understanding current political context
3) Properly interpret public opinion poll questions and result summaries
4) Explain the relationship between media, public opinion, and American democracy

Requirements and Grading
Grades will be assigned as follows:
- Midterm 20%
- Final Exam 20%
- Paper #1 15%
- Seminar paper 30%
- Participation 15%

Paper Assignments

**Paper #1: Media Paper**
Keep a journal of all your news media usage from February 8-14, 2004. *Briefly*, record what you watched, listened to, read, etc., and your reaction. Using both the log and your typical long-term patterns, describe your use of the news media and other media, both how much you use and how you use it. That is, tell what media you use in relation to politics and how much you use each. Also, discuss whether you seek out mainly information that supports your point of view and how you react when dealing with information that appears to challenge your political beliefs. Also discuss how non-news media, e.g., Saturday Night Live, Letterman, might influence your political views. Some questions to think about: what news media sources do you generally rely upon and why? How do your political views shape the media sources you use—and how to you think these unique sources shape your views? What media source do you turn to when a major news event occurs, e.g., election, 9-11, etc., and is this different from what you usually rely upon? Do you feel that the media you rely upon keeps you sufficiently informed? Do they keep you objectively informed? 6 Pages Maximum (not including the attached journal). *Due February 19.* You are responsible for the full details on the assignment available at http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS411/PaperInfo.htm

Choose an issue of public opinion (at least tangentially related to politics) that interests you. What has been the course of public opinion on this issue over recent years/decades? Has it been volatile or stable—why? What accounts for changes in public opinion on this issue? Are there major differences in how particular groups respond to this issue—why? Do you think citizens are truly knowledgeable about this issue? Has opinion on this issue affected government action—or vice versa? How has media coverage affected public opinion on this issue? How has media coverage of this issue changed? 15 Pages Maximum. *Due April 27.* You are responsible for the full details on the assignment available at http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS411/PaperInfo.htm
**General Information:** Policies regarding all paper assignments can be found at http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS411/PaperGuidelines.htm. You are expected to read these guidelines before submitting your paper. Additional information for each assignment can be found at http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS411/PaperInfo.htm. This will provide more detailed information and grading criteria for the paper assignments.

**Late Policy**
It is expected that exams will be taken and assignments turned in when they are scheduled on the syllabus. If you unable to take an exam or turn in an assignment at the assigned time for a valid reason, you **must** let the instructor know in advance in order to take a make-up exam. Failure to do so will result in a 0. Assignments will be downgraded a letter grade for each day they are late.

**Class Website**
The class website at http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS411 is an additional resource designed to assist you in the class. It will contain important announcements and archived lecture outlines as well as basic course information.

**Class Email list**
On occasion, announcements will be made through email messages. The University has an official email address on file for each of you. It is your responsibility to see to it that you receive email from this account.

**Academic Integrity**
Students are expected to complete their assignments with due regard to academic integrity. In order to do so they should familiarize themselves with the relevant sections of the student code of conduct (Sections 7-13). By signing all work submitted on paper, or by identifying themselves in work submitted electronically, students affirm that they neither gave nor received unauthorized aid. Collaboration on assignments among students may only occur when explicitly authorized by an instructor.

In particular the Department of Political Science takes plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism is “the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas.” Students found guilty of academic misconduct will at a minimum receive a 0 for the assignment and have their conduct reported to the office of student affairs. Depending on the severity of the infraction, it is possible that you will automatically fail the course.

**Disability**
Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653
Schedule of Topics and Assigned Readings

January 13  
Course Introduction

January 15  
Media Overview  
Bennett, Chapter 1

January 20-22  
Real Media Biases  
Bennett, chapter 2; Jamieson, chapter 1

January 27 – Feb 3  
Media, Public Opinion and Political Campaigns  
Bennett, chapter 4; Jamieson, chapters 2-3; Glynn, chapter 12

February 5  
Unreal Media Biases (Partisan Bias)  
Goldberg, from Bias*  
Alterman, from What Liberal Media*  
Boehlert, “The Press vs. Al Gore”  
Watts et al., “Elite Cues and Media Bias in Presidential Campaigns”

February 10-12  
Media as a Business  
Bennett, chapter 3

February 17-19  
How Journalists shape the News  
Bennett, chapters 5-6  
Murad, “Shouting at the Crocodile” in Into the Buzzsaw*  
*Paper Assignment #1 due February 19

February 24-26  
Media Coverage of War and Foreign Policy  
Jamieson, chapter 6  
PIPA, “Misperceptions, the Media, and the Iraq War”*

March 2  
Midterm

March 4  
What is Public Opinion?  
Glynn et al., chapter 1

March 9-11  
Spring Break

March 16-23  
Measuring Public Opinion  
Glynn et al., Chapters 1 & 3

March 25-30  
Formation of Public Opinion  
Glynn et al., Chapters 4-6
April 1-6  Public Opinion and Democracy  Glynn et al., Chapters 7 & 8

April 8  Easter Break

April 13-15  Influences of and Influences on Public Opinion  Glynn et al., Chapters 9 & 11; Bennett, chapter 7; Jamieson, chapter 7

April 20-22  Public Opinion on Contemporary Political Issues  Glynn et al., Chapter 10  Gallup, “American Public Opinion Through the Century”*  Explore recent data at: http://www.pollingreport.com/issues.htm especially, abortion, drugs, guns, law and civil rights, and race

April 27-29  Media, Public Opinion, and the Future of American Democracy  Bennett, chapter 8; Jamieson, chapter 7  Paper #2 Due April 27

May 11, 1:00pm  Final Exam