

**POLS 4550 Mass Media and American Government: The Times They Are A Changin'**  
**(and we aren't really sure if we like it or if we understand the implications)**

Spring 2020

Dr. Audrey Haynes

Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 am to 12:15 pm

Baldwin Hall 101D (First floor; room with all screens on walls)

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm and by appointment. Make sure to email prior to coming to office hours to make sure office hours are not already full.

**Course Description and Goals**

This course examines the way in which our modern mass media, particularly the news media, have influenced the nature and dynamics of democratic politics in the United States. We will cover the history of media and politics, focusing on the role that government has played on mass media development. We will examine the important issues that emerged as the mass media developed with extra attention to the contemporary age and the question of growth of media power houses, implications of media monopolies, the adaptation of media during the technological revolutions that have emerged, from the steam engine to the internet, and the current trends in polarized media systems. The emergence of "fake news", both real and imagined, and all the implications for American society as well as globally.

More generally, we will be concerned with the ways the mass media, particularly, news and political media, influence how we think and act in the political world. Specific topics will include how news is made – process and problems, the role of the news media in campaigns and elections, how the news influences our political attitudes and behaviors, how media coverage of government influence policy makers and how political actors may influence the news media (can you say, Twitter?).

Some questions we will be addressing throughout the course include:

- What are the "mass" media? How do we define them? What role do they play in American society? In other countries? Global media trends?
- Does media content help the American political process or does it create anxiety or inaccurate portrayals of it?

- Are the media actors a part of the political process or do they primarily react to political forces?
- Do the owners and controllers of the media messages act in the public interest or do they have other motives?
- Are audiences primarily reactive to media content or do they psychologically work toward integrating media messages with their own experiences?
- What role will the internet and other new media play in the American political process?
- Can the news media change the course of a political campaign? Can they change the course of a legislative vote?
- What is “fake news” and why should we be concerned with it?
- Why would politicians or other political players want to delegitimize news organizations? And what happens to our ability to know the facts when news sources are no longer trusted by larger groupings in society?
- Can political media, such as political ads or documentaries, change or reinforce powerfully, the way you think about a political phenomenon?
- On a practical level, how can you navigate and utilize dependable news sources and learn to identify intentional as well as unintentional bias?

### **Course Objectives**

1. To facilitate the development of a working body of knowledge on the mass media and American politics for each student including terminology and specific details and elements.
2. To generate critical thinking on the topic of the mass media and American politics, particularly the relationships between political elements and their dynamics.
3. To develop skills in the identification of propaganda, framing techniques, ideological bias, and other important elements of media, to enhance student recognition of media message manipulation techniques.
4. To encourage students to objectively identify good journalism versus poor journalism as it relates to political process and outcome.
5. To understand and evaluate the interaction of media with campaigns, the presidency, Congress, the Courts, interest groups, and political parties.
6. To conduct original research of a media related phenomenon.

## Required text:

Doris A. Graber and Johanna Dunaway: Mass Media and American Politics. Tenth Edition. Sage/CQ Press. The paperback version of this book is completely neon orange and quite recognizable.

Rental: \$25 and up

PDF: \$19.95 [https://textbooks2buy.com/products/mass-media-and-american-politics-10th-edition-by-doris-a-graber-ebook-pdf?variant=21509209653331&currency=USD&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=google+shopping](https://textbooks2buy.com/products/mass-media-and-american-politics-10th-edition-by-doris-a-graber-ebook-pdf?variant=21509209653331&currency=USD&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=google+shopping)

Used: \$45 and up

New: \$67 at Amazon

There will be additional digital readings at times provided in pdf form or as a link to the reading on the internet. There are no additional book costs for this course.

## Student Requirements

**Preparation:** Students are expected to have read and considered the assigned course materials in preparation for each class meeting. Students are also expected to participate in class discussion and to be ready to contribute on the day's topic. I will learn your names and use them: to call your name and ask you a question every now and then. Our class time will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, group work/activities, in class quizzes, exams and media content viewing.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required and thus will be taken on many days (often randomly at the start or end of class), generally through a graded quiz or activity. I want you to be there. That is the best way to learn. I will do my best to make lecture and discussion interesting and enjoyable, but I cannot do it without you. The best classes are the ones that the students actively contribute to. When you make the commitment to make this a very good class, it will be. Bring your brains to class and let's work out together. Brain Burpees!!

## Course Requirements and Evaluation

Your final grade will be based on the sum of points earned from each of the following assignments:

Quizzes/homework/group work	25 points
Exams	30 points
Research Project	25 points
Final	20 points

### Overall Grades:

Grades are constructed to reflect the university standards posted at [http://bulletin.uga.edu/Bulletin\\_Files/acad/Grades.html](http://bulletin.uga.edu/Bulletin_Files/acad/Grades.html), which are summarized below.

Grades will be based on how many points you earn according to the following distribution:

"Excellent"	A-=90-92 pts. A=93-100 pts.
"Good"	B-=80-82 pts. B=83-86 pts. B+=87-89 pts.
"Satisfactory"	C-=70-76 pts. C+=77-79 pts.
"Passing"	D =60-69 pts.
"Failure"	F =fewer than 60 pts.

NOTE: ***I do not round*** or curve in any way. If your final grade is a 92.9999, it will translate to an A-. Do not ask about rounding at the end of the class. Do work hard prior to the end of the semester so you will not even have to contemplate the need for rounding. There will be ample assessments.

Quizzes/homework may be announced or unannounced. YOU are expected to stay current on your reading.

Exam dates can be found on the calendar on our eLC course page.

All exam dates are tentative and are subject to some change if necessary. (For example, if there is a natural disaster or a flu epidemic. Let's hope we don't have to move exams, but sometimes we will perhaps move a little more slowly over material or it may be to your advantage to have an extra day or so to prepare. I will never move a test date without giving ample announcement time and discussing it with the class.

Exams will cover a particular set of modules and the readings and lectures connected to them. Exams will utilize a wide variety of question formats, which may include multiple

choice, short answer, matching, longer answer, essay, true and false (everyone's favorite), and applied or analytical questions. Tests may be challenging and long; preparation is a must.

The research project is detailed in the Start Module found in the Table of Contents on our course page. Make sure to read through the process carefully.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the UGA Disabilities Services office will be accommodated according to university policy. If you have documentation for accommodations from Disabilities Services, please present it to your teaching assistant as soon as possible, and please notify the lead instructor if you need additional assistance. For more information, contact Disabilities Services at 706-542-8719. If you cannot reach your classroom—or my office on the fourth floor of Baldwin Hall by stairs—please notify me or your teaching assistant as soon as possible so I can work to make new arrangements.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a core value of institutions of higher learning. All students, upon enrolling, must pledge: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism, cheating, and dishonesty. The university policy on academic integrity is posted at: <http://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty>. To qualify the application of the policy in this course: tests and written assignments (including critical thinking exercises) should be your own work, while studying and class preparation can (and should) be done with others.

### **Tentative schedule**

- Make sure the week's reading is done PRIOR to Monday's class.
- Classes begin on January 7<sup>th</sup> (Tuesday at the University of Georgia. Happy New Year!
- MLK Day is January 20 (Monday); no classes.
- Midterm point is February 28.
- Spring Break is March 9-13.
- Withdraw Date is March 20.
- Classes end April 28.
- Reading Day is April 29.

- Our final exam will be May 5 from Noon to 3 pm.

### **Week 1 –January 7 and 9**

Module 1: Media Power and Government Control Read Ch. 1 in Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.  
Discussion of course project outlined in our course page under Project Module.

### **Week 2 – January 14 and 16**

Module 2: History of Mass Media – lecture only. No text reading.  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

### **January 20<sup>th</sup> is Martin Luther King Day**

### **Week 3 – January 21 and 23**

Module 3: Ownership, Regulation, and Guidance of Media – Ch. 2 in Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

### **Week 4 – January 28 and 30**

Module 4: Press Freedom and the Law – Ch. 3 Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

### **Week 5 – February 4 and 6**

Module 5: Media and Politics in the Changing Media Landscape- Ch. 4 Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

### **Week 6 - February 11**

**EXAM DAY!!!** Exam covers Modules 1-5

February 12: Lincoln's Birthday

February 13 – **Research Project Work Day**; Dr. Haynes in office all day for feedback on your research topic.

### **Week 7 – February 18 and 20** (Washington's Birthday)

Module 6: Journalists, News Making, and News Reporting – Ch, 5 and Ch. 6 Graber and Dunaway; Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

**Week 8 – February 25 and 27**

Module 8: Congress and the Courts – Ch. 8 Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

**Week 9 – March 3 and 5**

Module 7: The Presidency and Mass Media – Ch. 7 Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

*Week 10 - March 9-13 Spring Break (Be safe and productive; be kind and do good and relax and have fun, too!)*

**Week 11 – March 17 and 19**

Module 9: State and Local News –Ch. 9 Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

**Withdrawal Deadline - March 20<sup>th</sup>****Week 12 – March 24 and 26**

Module 10: Foreign Affairs Coverage Ch. 10 Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

**Week 13 – March 31 and April 2**

**Exam Day March 31:** Covers Modules 6-10. April 2 is a research project day; Dr. Haynes will be in office all day to consult on papers.

**Week 14 – April 7 and 9**

Module 11: Media Influences, Attitudes and Behavior Ch. 11 Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

**Week 15 – April 14 and 16**

Module 12: Elections and Mass Media Ch. 12 Graber and Dunaway  
Assorted readings and resources available within the course module.

**Week 16 – April 21 and 23**

Module 13: New Sources of News: Fake, Partisan, and Otherwise Ch. 13 and 14. Other readings may be available through our eLC page.  
Final research papers due on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Please make sure that your name or your team's names are on the cover page.

**Week 17- April 28 Wrap up and Evaluations**

## **Reading Day May 1**

**Final exam will be May 5 from Noon to 3 pm** and will cover Modules 11 to 13 with new material (40 percent of the questions) and review/comprehensive material from Modules 10-10 (60 percent of the questions). This is easy if you have studied and kept up. There will be an applied/analysis question. Students will have the entire three hours but the exam will likely only require 2 hours, tops.