RPOS 365: Government and the Mass Media  
Fall 2013 • University at Albany  
Tuesday & Thursday: 8:45–10:05 a.m. (SS 256)

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Twitter: @DrCeciliaF  
Office hours: Tuesday: 10:15–12:15 p.m. and by appointment (HU 16)  
POS Contact Office: Humanities 16; Phone (518) 442-3112

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Unlike other countries with government-controlled mass media, the American media are charged with the dual task of acting as a “watchdog” for government while also existing as a profit-driven industry. How can media be expected to preserve Constitutional ideals and foster civic participation while also having to maintain a healthy bottom line? Is this set-up fair? Is it feasible? These questions serve as the framework for the course and ones to which we will return throughout our study. To that end, we will look at institutional and policy effects media have on government, as well as the government’s influence on the industry. You also will be introduced to relevant topics such as the history of media and government, the regulatory process and policies, and media ownership. We will also explore other areas of the mass media that influence democratic participation and public perception such as political cartoons, magazines, television, movies, and the Internet, and examine the effects on citizens, politicians and the political process in general.

REQUIRED READINGS
There is one textbook and assorted readings for the class.

- Additional readings may be accessed through Blackboard (RPOS 365 folder)

EXAMS & ASSIGNMENTS
Your final grade for this course will be based on two exams, pop quizzes, short papers and a research project. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with me in order to make up exams and/or submit late papers.

Exams & Quizzes. There will be two (2) exams throughout the semester. Material for the exams will be taken from the readings, lectures, videos, and class discussion/group work. The tests will be essay-based. If you are unable to attend class on an exam day, I will give make-up exams only if you have obtained proper documentation from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies or other official source (e.g., doctor, health center, etc.). There will also be quizzes on the readings given throughout the semester. Quizzes cannot be made up.

Short Papers. Each Thursday, I will present a topic or question for students to think about. The topic may be from lecture, readings, a point that arises during discussions, current events, a video, etc. You are expected to write a short paper about the question/topic (2-3 double-spaced pages). Short papers are due each Tuesday by the beginning of class. Papers will not be accepted once class ends. E-mail submissions will NOT be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made. Papers will be graded on an A-E basis. I am happy to discuss the papers with you during office hours, via e-mail, etc.; however, I will not review drafts based on the brevity and time frame of the assignment. You are only expected to write five (5) papers, so choose your freebies wisely. If you do not complete the short papers, you will receive an F per missing paper. Papers cannot be made up unless you have permission from me.

Research Paper. You will be expected to write an 8-10 page research paper to be turned in on Thursday, May 8, 2014, which will be worth 25% of your grade. More detail about the paper will be given during the
semester, but what I’m looking for is a thoughtful, critical examination of an issue or question in which the
media and government come into play. You may conduct your own research, but please see me ahead of time so we can discuss what I’m looking for.

**OR**

*Research Project.* For the more creative types, you may want to do a project instead of a traditional research paper. Projects may be done individually or in groups and will require a presentation and some written report (TBA based on project). Same as the papers, all materials are due on **Thursday, May 8, 2014** and counts for 25% of your grade. More detail to come, but some potential projects include, but are not limited to: maintaining your own political blog, multimedia presentation and paper, etc. Be creative.

*Citations.* Anything you take out of books and/or other sources—directly quoted or paraphrased—must be cited. The easiest format to use is MLA, although any format is acceptable as long as you are consistent. If you have any questions about what should be cited or how to cite, ask. If it’s 3 a.m. the night before the paper is due and you don’t know whether or not to cite, err on the side of caution: *when in doubt, cite.*

**Grade Breakdown**

- Short Papers: 250
- Exams 1 and 2: 300 (150 each)
- Final short paper: 100
- Quizzes: 100
- Research Project: 250 (50 each)

**1000 points**

Cheating, plagiarism or any other type of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students found to be engaged in such practice will receive an E for the course. UA policies regarding academic integrity may be found at: [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bul...](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html).

*Missed work.* It is YOUR responsibility to get notes, etc. if you miss a class. Lectures/slides will NOT be posted electronically, so it is advised that you get to know some of your classmates in case you are absent.

**CLASS INFORMATION**

*Questions.* Any and all questions are encouraged. If you are unclear about any of the material we are covering in class that day, or have already covered, please do not hesitate to stop me and ask. Feel free to stop by during my office hours or make an appointment and we will meet at a mutually convenient time. I am also available via e-mail and generally return e-mails quickly. Late-night e-mails are fine…we’ve all been there, I’d rather have you ask than lose points on an exam or paper, especially when your confusion could have been easily cleared up with a quick e-mail.

*Participation.* Although not graded, participation is still expected *and can help your grade.* Sometimes, the best insights and questions are raised during discussions; those usually are also the ones that stick with you well after the semester has ended. I am looking forward to hearing what you have to say. **One important caveat:** Because politics in general can be contentious, it is imperative that *everyone respects each other’s opinions.* Disagreements are good; disrespect is not.

*Weather Cancellations.* If class is cancelled due to inclement weather, we will simply pick up where we left off, as opposed to moving ahead on the syllabus. I will adjust the schedule as needed and will inform the class of any changes. If you are unsure as to whether or not UA will be open or closed, you can go online to the UA web page. If you commute, please use your best judgment and keep me posted.
COURSE SYLLABUS (Subject to change)

Videos and Handouts: Whereas a great deal of material will be taken from the readings, we will also be viewing videos, reading newspaper articles, and drawing from other media. Videos and all supplementary materials are fair game for exams. Therefore, if you are absent, it is your responsibility to get the information.

Short papers are due each Tuesday by the beginning of class. Papers will not be accepted after class ends unless I approve. E-mail submissions will NOT be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made. Must write 5 for full credit.

Th 01/23 Introduction

T 01/28 Government and Media: Issues and Questions
Th 01/30 History of Mass Media
   • Reading, Jillson, Ch. 5—“The Mass Media and the Political Agenda” (only read history of mass media on pages 98-108)
   • Reading: Parenti, “From Cronkite’s Complaint to Orwell’s Oversight”

T 01/30 The Relationship Between Media and Government
   • Reading: Graber, Ch. 1—“Media Power and Government Control”
Th 02/06 The First Amendment: Mass Media, the Constitution, and the Supreme Court
   • Reading: Graber, Ch. 3—“Press Freedom and the Law”

Th 02/13 NO CLASS

T 02/18 Congress Gets Into the Act: Rules and Regulation
   • Reading: Graber, Ch. 2—“Ownership, Regulation and Guidance of Media”
   • Video: “The Freakin’ FCC”
Th 02/20 NO CLASS

T 02/25 Institutions: The Chief Executive
Th 02/27 Public Opinion
   • Reading: Graber, Ch. 7—“Media Influence on Attitudes and Behavior”

T 03/04 Public Opinion + Catch-up (if necessary)
   • Reading: Tyson—“Polling on the Deficit: Why Question Order Matters”
Th 03/06 EXAM #1

T 03/11 The Fourth Estate: News Media
   • Reading: Graber, Ch. 4—“News Making and News Reporting Routines”
Th 03/13 The Fourth Estate: News Media
   • Reading: Bennett, Ch. 2—“News Content: Four Information Biases That Matter
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Monday Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>03/18</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS—BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>03/20</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS—BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>03/25</td>
<td>Major News Stories&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Graber, Ch. 5—“Reporting Extraordinary Events”</td>
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<td>03/27</td>
<td>Vietnam: The Living Room War&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Campbell, W. Joseph. (2010). “Debunking the ‘Cronkite Moment.’” In, Getting it Wrong… (Ch. 5): 85-100. (E)</td>
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<td>04/01</td>
<td>Influencing Policy&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Graber, Ch. 6—“The Media as Policymakers”</td>
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<td>04/03</td>
<td>Policy or Pandering?&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Sparrow, “‘Smack is Back:’ When Presidents and the Press Collide, the Scares Never Stop”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>OR</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Campbell, “The ‘Fantasy Panic:’ The News Media and the ‘Crack-Baby’ Myth”&lt;br&gt;**CHOOSE ONE (1) READING AND PREPARE DISCUSSION REMARKS AND QUESTIONS TO BE HANDED IN. WILL COUNT AS QUIZ GRADE.</td>
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<td>04/08</td>
<td>Global Media Presence&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Graber, Ch. 11—“ Foreign Affairs Coverage”</td>
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<td>04/10</td>
<td>Campaigns &amp; Elections&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Ridout—“Free Advertising: How the Media Amplify Campaign Messages”</td>
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<td>04/15</td>
<td>Campaign &amp; Elections</td>
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<td><strong>EXAM #2</strong></td>
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<td>04/22</td>
<td>Arts and Entertainment: Primetime Gets Political&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Stark, “<em>All in the Family</em> and the Sitcom ‘Revolution’”&lt;br&gt;<strong>Video:</strong> Will begin “Maude’s Dilemma”</td>
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<td>04/24</td>
<td>Arts and Entertainment: Primetime Gets Political&lt;br&gt;<strong>Video:</strong> “Maude’s Dilemma,” Parts 1 and 2</td>
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<td>04/29</td>
<td>New Media&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Carr—“Is Google Making Us Stupid?”</td>
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<td>05/01</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
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<td>05/06</td>
<td>Looking Ahead&lt;br&gt;<strong>Reading:</strong> Graber, Ch. 12—“Current Trends and Future Directions in Media Policy”</td>
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<td>05/08</td>
<td>Wrap-Up: Lessons Learned, Issues Raised…What Next?&lt;br&gt;<strong>RESEARCH PROJECT DUE</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>FINAL EXAM DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS</strong></td>
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<td>05/13</td>
<td>Submit FINAL EXAM (3:30 – 5:30 p.m. @ HU 16) + Pick up FINAL PAPER</td>
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