

# **POL 165: Media and Politics**

## **University of California, Davis**

Fall 2016

M & W 10:00–11:50am

Wellman 106

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This course examines the role of the mass media in democratic politics in the United States. In the U.S., “the” media consists of a diverse group of news sources, including elite news outlets (e.g., ABC, CBS, NBC, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*) as well as cable outlets (e.g., CNN, Fox, MSNBC), chat-rooms, bloggers, talk radio, Internet sites, and tabloid shows. And, of course, citizens frequently get news and political information channeled through Facebook, Twitter, and other social media.

This course has two main goals: First, to understand the forces that shape the information that mass media sources provide to citizens. Second, to understand the impact of this information on citizens and politicians—with implications for public policy. The course is divided accordingly into two sections: “What makes the news?” and “How does the news affect citizens and politics?”

By the end of the quarter, successful students should be able to:

- Understand the formal and informal rules that govern news reporting
- Identify the forces that shape the news agenda
- Understand how the media influence public opinion, elections, and policy
- Develop effective critical-thinking tools to search for and evaluate the news

Most classes will include lectures and slide-based presentations, but the course is also designed to allow for significant student questioning and discussion. Regardless of class size, I expect participation. So come to class ready to discuss things; if things are confusing, come with questions. If you do not participate of your own initiative, be prepared to be called on in class. The more you participate in discussion, the better the class will be and the easier it will be for you to learn more and, ultimately, earn a better grade. Plus, it’s my habit to include questions on exams that can only be answered by people who attended—and participated in—each class. In other words, in order to do well on assignments and

exams, you need *to engage actively* in the readings and you need *to engage actively* in the lectures and class discussion. Neither one activity is sufficient on its own.

A syllabus is like a contract, so I've tried to specify lots of details in the document to follow, sometimes in relatively harsh language. Don't be turned off. We'll read a wide variety of very interesting things and you'll learn a lot in this class. I am excited to teach it and am looking forward to each week of what follows. I certainly hope it will be one of the best courses you ever take.

## **Class Expectations**

Please abide by the following classroom etiquette. I have developed this set of expectations not to be Draconian, but because outlining these guidelines at the beginning of every course helps me focus my time and attention less on logistical issues and more on teaching. I find the material I teach tremendously exciting, and I love teaching it.

### ***SmartSite***

All information for the course can be accessed on the UC Davis SmartSite web page for this course. Please do not email questions until you have double-checked these resources documents for the answer.

### ***Email***

I welcome email questions and comments, as do TAs. When you email me or a TA, you should compose your email as you would any piece of professional correspondence. Specifically:

- So that I know which course you are emailing about, be sure to include POL165 below your name AND in the subject line of the email.
- Begin the email with a salutation (e.g., "Dear Professor Boydston," "Hi Dr. Boydston"). It is ridiculous to start a professional email without a salutation. "Hey" does not count.
- Use a capital letter to start the first word of each sentence and every proper noun.
- Use complete sentences, correct spelling and correct punctuation. Texting language is for texting. Professional emails require full use of the English language, which (by the way) is a lovely language.
- Be courteous and respectful.
- Sign off with "Sincerely," or "Best," or the equivalent, and below this line write your first and last name in your first email and then just your first name thereafter, followed by POL165.

Email etiquette applies to emails you send to a TA as well as those you send to me; be conscientious. We will respond to your emails as quickly as possible, but please do not expect a quick response to email sent on weekends or after 5pm on any day. That said, remember that the TA(s) and I really are very excited to hear your questions and thoughts about the class or related topics.

### ***Lecture Slides***

Power point slides will be available on SmartSite, usually by the morning of a given lecture. Feel free to print out the slides prior to class. Given that I make these slides available for you to download, I do not guarantee that I will slow down or stop my lecture to allow you to copy down the material on the slide. However, I am always happy to slow down, repeat myself, or explain an idea further if you have questions about the material. Be warned that the material on the slides usually does not include all the important information we will cover in class. The slides are designed to help structure your note taking

and studying—not to replace it. Thus, I encourage you to attend class each day. And if you miss a class I encourage you to talk with a fellow student to get filled in on what you missed and, of course, ask me and/or the TA(s) if you have questions. Moreover, the assigned readings are required, even if we do not discuss them in detail in class.

### ***Desk Name Tag (yep, you read that correctly!)***

Even in large lecture classes, I try to foster as much class discussion as possible. Toward that aim, I ask that you place a “desk name tag” on the desk in front of you in class each day. Although attendance will rarely be taken, showing up to class with your desk name tag will help your participation grade. The best way to make this name tag is to take a 8½ x 11 inch piece of construction paper or lightweight cardboard, fold it in half lengthwise (so it’s now 4¼ x 11 inches), and write your name on one side so that your name is upright when you put the folded piece of paper like a tent on the desk in front of you. Please write your full name (**FIRST AND LAST**—using whatever name you prefer to be called as your first name) in **LARGE, VERY DARK, BOLD** letters.

### ***Laptops and Other Electronics***

I love my laptop. And my phone. And my tablet. And I understand how tempting it can be to look at one’s electronic devices instead of the person at the front of the room. To conquer this temptation, I ask that you resort to old-school pen-and-paper notetaking. In other words, do **NOT** use your laptop (or iPad or smartphone or any other electronic device) in class. If you have a documented learning disorder that is helped by typing your notes, feel free to talk with me and I will be happy to consider an exception (although it doesn’t mean I’ll grant one). Finally, just like at the movies, please silence your phones.

### ***Talking in Class***

I hope you will talk in class (a lot!) to facilitate rich class discussions. When you talk in class, please talk **LOUDLY** so that others can hear you. If you have something to say that you do not want everyone to hear then please—for the love of Jiminy Cricket—resist the urge to talk to your neighbor during class and say it after class instead.

## **Required Readings**

Graber, Doris. 2015. *Media Power in Politics*, sixth edition, New York: CQ Press. ISBN 9781604266108.

Boydston, Amber E. 2014. *Making the News: Politics, the Media, and Agenda Setting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9780226065571.

Additional articles will be assigned throughout the quarter. These articles will be available on SmartSite.

*Note: I am the co-author of one of the required books. Having to buy one of your professor’s books borders on the obnoxious, I know; sorry about that. However, I don’t mind criticism, so feel free to rip it apart if you don’t like it. By the nature of the course though, you’ll see that the book links closely with our topics of discussion. I do receive (modest) royalties on the book (\$0.08!), and I will refund that amount to students registered in the class who attend the last day of class. On the last day of class, I will give you one dime... don’t spend it all in one place.*

## Grading

Participation	10%
Exam I	30%
Exam II (Cumulative)	30%
Content Analysis Project Data	5%
Content Analysis Project Paper	25%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Possible Extra Credit: Experiment</i>	<i>1%</i>

All items listed above are detailed below.

The final letter grade will be assigned according to the standard table:

97-100: A+	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+
93-96: A	83-86: B	73-76: C	63-66: D
90-92: A-	80-82: B-	70-72: C-	60-62: D-
			00-59: F

Grading will be performed as follows: The TA(s) and I work collaboratively to develop a consistent grading rubric for all graded items. As for the actual grades assigned to you, the TA(s) alone are responsible, and their word on grades is final. Of course, they will consult with me throughout the grading process. But I will not override their grading decisions. I do not round grades up. So, for example, a final grade of 89.9 is a B+, not an A-. See the potential opportunity for extra credit, below.

## Participation

Your participation grade will be based on the overall effort you put into the class, including the effort you put into your research project assignments, your class attendance (with desk name tag—see above), and your participation in class discussions. Attendance will sometimes be taken at random, but even without attendance-taking it's amazing how quickly an instructor and TAs can differentiate the students who attend and participate from those who do not. Thus, do not assume that you will receive full marks for your participation grade automatically; you must earn every point yourself. Come to class, participate in class discussions, earn a good participation grade, and get more out of the class. It's a win-win situation. And if you're particularly shy (and even if you're not), consider visiting myself and the TA(s) during office hours.

## Beware—Everything's Fair Game for Exam Questions

Three kinds of information may appear on exams:

- 1) Material from the readings, even if we do not discuss it in class.
- 2) Material discussed in class, even if it is not covered in the readings.
- 3) Skills and insights you develop in your research assignments, even if they are not covered in the readings or explicitly discussed in class.

## Exams I and II

Both exams are closed-note and must be completed independently. Any attempt to smuggle in answers or copy from another student will constitute a violation of academic integrity.

Short of extraordinary circumstances, you will not be allowed to makeup an exam. If you have planned circumstances that you believe qualify as extraordinary (e.g., a non-flexible commitment), you must contact me regarding these circumstances at least two weeks in advance of the exam in question. Otherwise, you will only be allowed to make up an exam in the event of extreme and unpredictable circumstances (e.g., a hospitalization or a sudden death in the family) and then only if you provide documentation that verifies—to my personal level of satisfaction—the circumstances that made it impossible for you to take the exam as scheduled. In the event that you do take a makeup exam, be advised that in addition to receiving a different version of the written exam you would have received in class, you may also be required to complete additional essay questions and/or answer oral exam questions that will count toward your make-up exam grade.

## Content Analysis Project

This project requires students to perform a content analysis of two news sources over seven days. Students will then write a report summarizing their findings. Further details will be posted to SmartSite.

If you want, you can work with one other student on your research project, with the same expectations of quality/quantity as if you worked on your own. If you go this route, both students listed on the project will receive the same grade, no matter what the circumstances. So choose your collaborator wisely. Working with someone might make it more fun!

**Note:** The project requires some basic data collection and statistical analysis. Students who have taken POL 51 will likely benefit from that previous experience, and students who have not taken POL 51 should take particular care to stay in touch with me and/or the TA(s).

## Late Data/Paper Assignments

Technology failure (e.g., hard drive crash, stolen laptop) is not an acceptable excuse for late work—students must back up their data (e.g., get a Dropbox account!). If your computer crashes / is stolen / becomes self-aware the same week your assignment is due, we will feel very bad for you, but we will not grant you an extension. Likewise, except in rare, prolonged cases, illnesses and family emergencies are not acceptable excuses for late work; students should get their work done early in case unforeseen problems arise. ***You are responsible for staying in touch with the TA(s) and with me throughout the quarter about your progress on your research project, especially if you experience any difficulties.***

The project has two separate deadlines: one for data, and one for a paper. **Late data or a late paper each lose a full-letter grade (i.e., 10 percentage points) for each 24-hour period they are turned in after the deadline**, including weekends and holidays. For example, an assignment due Monday at 10am but not turned in until sometime between 10am on Wednesday and 10am on Thursday of the same week would be marked down 30% (three letter grades) below the earned grade (e.g., from a 95% (A) to a 65% (D)). Bottom line: Don't go there.

## **Extra Credit Experiment**

At some point in the quarter, you might be invited to participate in a social science experiment conducted in the Department of Political Science. It usually takes only about 15 minutes to participate in this kind of experiment, and doing so offers a neat way of seeing behind the scenes of the social science research that you will read about in this and other classes. Your responses in this experiment are completely anonymous. You will receive 1% extra credit on your final grade simply for showing up and participating. More information about this opportunity will be provided in class.

Research assignments are due (as an uploaded electronic document to SmartSite) at the beginning of class on the due date. Period.

## **Grade Appeals**

You may appeal a grade by submitting a written request to the TA(s) in two forms, both electronically and in hard copy (you should also CC me on the email). Appeals are due within one week of receiving the grade in question. Your written appeal should explain, in logical and concise (and polite) terms, why you believe you should have received a different grade. The TA(s) will take all grade appeals seriously, but be warned that once you appeal a grade they will reconsider that grade with an open mind, and re-grades can happen in either direction. If this reevaluation reveals that you deserved a higher grade than you received, your grade will be changed in your favor. If this process reveals that you deserved a lower grade than you received, your grade will be changed downward. If your original grade is deemed correct, your grade will remain the same.

## **Disabilities**

UC Davis encourages qualified students with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. I am strongly committed to the same policy. If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact the Student Disability Center at (530) 752-3184 as soon as possible to identify and document your specific needs. Additionally, it is your responsibility to contact me privately immediately at the beginning of the quarter (i.e., within the first week) so we can discuss how to accommodate your needs. Do not wait until just before an assignment deadline or an exam to inform me of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.

## **Academic Dishonesty<sup>1</sup>**

UC Davis and the Department of Political Science take violations of academic dishonesty seriously, as do I. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the UC Davis community are required to subscribe. In cases of a violation of academic integrity, it is policy to impose appropriate penalties that are consistent with University guidelines. Academic integrity cases will be sent to the office of Student Judicial Affairs.

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the text in this section has been directly obtained from the sections of the Princeton University website on Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities: <<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/rrr>>.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless I clearly state otherwise. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. See the following link for tips on how to avoid plagiarism: <<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf>>. In general, every time you use another person's idea, you must cite the person at the end of the sentence in which you use the idea. Every time you use a specific phrase, even if the phrase is only two words long (e.g., "the fourth branch of government" or "streams of policymaking"), you must put the phrase in quotation marks and cite the original author at the end of the sentence in which you use the phrase. Citations should be based on the Chicago Manual of Style. See the following link for citations guidelines: <[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)>.

In an examination setting, unless I give explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in-class or take-home, violations of academic integrity shall consist of any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices (including the internet!), or of any attempt to give assistance, whether or not the one so doing has completed his or her own work. Other violations include, but are not limited to, any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in regard to an examination, such as tampering with a graded exam or claiming another's work to be one's own. Specifically, collaborating with another person to complete independent work constitutes cheating.

Violations also consist of obtaining or attempting to obtain copies of exams, assignments, or any other course materials from earlier versions of this course. Lying to or misleading me or a TA also constitutes a serious violation of academic integrity.

## **Sexual Harassment Resources**

UC Davis is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage students who have experienced some form of sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need.

Confidential support and academic advocacy can be found with several campus resources, including CARE (Center for Advocacy, Resources and Education) at (530) 752-3299 and Counseling Services at (530) 752-2349. More information here:

[http://sexualviolence.ucdavis.edu/docs/sexual\\_violence\\_support\\_brochure\\_jul15.pdf](http://sexualviolence.ucdavis.edu/docs/sexual_violence_support_brochure_jul15.pdf)

## Weekly Assignments and Topics

The table below shows reading assignments, exam dates, and research project deadlines. Everything is required. All non-book readings are available on SmartSite, under Files/Readings. You should do each day's readings before that day's class. I'll generally keep us on schedule, but note that discussions may run over from one class to the next.

<b>PART 1: WHAT MAKES THE NEWS?</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings Due</b>	<b>DUE</b>
<b>Week 0</b>			
Wed, Sept 21	Media in Crisis?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus</li> </ul>	
<b>Week 1</b>			
Mon, Sept 26	Watchdog Journalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graber: Chapters 3, 5, &amp; 33</li> </ul>	
Wed, Sept 28	<i>Content Analysis Project Overview</i> <i>Film: All the President's Men</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content Analysis Data Instructions</li> <li>• Content Analysis Report Guidelines</li> <li>• Example Reports</li> </ul>	
<b>Week 2</b>			
Mon, Oct 3	<i>Film: All the President's Men</i>		
Wed, Oct 5	What Makes the News? Part I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boydston: Chapters 1 &amp; 2</li> </ul>	
<b>Week 3</b>			
Mon, Oct 10	What Makes the News? Part II		
Wed, Oct 12	Domestic Politics & Local News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boydston: Chapters 3 &amp; 4</li> </ul>	
<b>Week 4</b>			
Mon, Oct 17	Foreign Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graber: Chapter 34</li> </ul>	
Wed, Oct 19	Biases in News Reporting I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SmartSite Reading 1</li> </ul>	



<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings Due</b>	<b>DUE</b>
Week 5			
Mon, Oct 24	Biases in News Reporting II	• SmartSite Reading 2	
Wed, Oct 26	<i>Guest Lecture: Peter van Aelst</i>		
Week 6			
<b>Mon, Oct. 31</b>	<b>Content Analysis Report Workshop &amp; Midterm Review</b>	<b>• Bring your drafts</b>	<b>Content Analysis Data Due</b>
<b>Wed, Nov 2</b>	<b>Exam I</b>	<b>• Bring: Blue Book (unmarked), Scantron, and #2 pencil</b>	
<b>PART 2: HOW DOES THE NEWS AFFECT CITIZENS AND POLITICS?</b>			
Week 7			
Mon, Nov 7	Learning from the Media: Minimal Effects?	• Graber: Chapters 7 & 14	
Wed, Nov 9	Learning as a Byproduct	• Graber: Chapters 9 & 12	
Week 8			
Mon, Nov 14	Motivated Reasoning	• SmartSite Reading 3	
Wed, Nov 16	Campaign Advertising I	• SmartSite Readings 4 & 5	
Week 9			
Mon, Nov 21	Campaign Advertising II	• Graber: Chapters 13 & 18	<b>Content Analysis Reports Due</b>
<b>Wed, Nov 23</b>	<b>No Class (Happy Thanksgiving!)</b>		

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings Due</b>	<b>DUE</b>
Week 10			
Mon, Nov 28	<i>Film: Spotlight</i>		
Wed, Nov 30	<i>Film: Spotlight</i> <i>Life lessons</i>		
FINALS WEEK			
<b>Monday, Dec 5 8am in Wellman 106</b>	<b>Exam II</b>	<b>• Bring: Blue Book (unmarked), Scantron, and #2 pencil</b>	