

Political Science 433
Politics, Media and Public Opinion
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Spring, 2008
CRN# 12347
MW 4:30 – 5:45 pm
UCB 330

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday
2:00 pm – 4:30 pm,
and by appointment.

Course Overview

This course constitutes an examination of the role of the mass media in shaping public opinion and influencing governance. The first section of this course is devoted to an overall examination of public opinion. The second section is dedicated to understanding the special influence that the mass media has on public opinion. The last section will comprise an analysis of the role of the mass media in the functioning of democratic politics in the United States. Special attention will be paid to the portrayal of political issues, candidates and political themes in popular culture, including film, television, radio, music, the internet, billboards, bumper-stickers, and slogans. This is an “American Politics” class, and examples and analyses in class discussion will focus almost exclusively on the United States. However, students are invited to explore foreign political issues involving public opinion and the media in this course for purposes of comparison. Students should have a firm understanding of the functioning of politics in the United States prior to taking this course (POLS 101 is a prerequisite).

Goals of the Course

- You will be able to apply different theories that describe how people process information about politics and the effects of this processing on their attitudes, beliefs and behavior.
- You will be able to understand how the media define, shape, reinforce, and transform Americans’ political ideas, economic ideologies, and policy preferences.
- You will be able to uncover examples and sources of media bias in the presentation of political issues, candidates, and ideologies.
- You will be able to describe how public officials, candidates, political organizations and interest groups use the mass media to communicate with the public.
- You will be able to describe how the media uses stories related to politicians and political issues to increase circulation and to boost ratings.
- You will be able to compare and contrast the different strategies by which citizens can influence the mass media.
- You will be able to identify and critique how feature films and television programs “construct” political identities and set the groundwork for social, political and economic interaction.
- You will become familiar with “alternative” forms of media and their impact on politics.
- You will understand how different media institutions have evolved over time and how their history has shaped their current operation and influence.
- You will understand the constitutional, legal, and economic issues and conflicts raised by the existence of a free press in a democratic, corporate-dominated, capitalist society.
- You will become familiar with the occupational norms of journalism as a profession, and you will be able to explain how these norms shape the coverage of political news.
- You will be able to describe how the media function as the “Fourth Branch of Government.”
- You will develop the analytic tools to critically assess the messages you encounter in the media.
- You will understand how you can take a more active part in learning and communicating about politics.

Required Texts

- Erikson, Robert, and Kent Tedin. 2007. *American Public Opinion: Its Origin, Contents and Impact*, Updated 7th ed. New York: Pearson Longman. ISBN# 0-321-4319-0.
- Graber, Doris A. 2006. *Mass Media and American Politics*, 7th ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly. ISBN# 1-56802-917-9.
- Kumar, Martha Joynt. 2007. *Managing the President's Message: The White House Communications Operation*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. ISBN# 0-8018-8652-X.
- Rosensteil, Tom, Marion Just, Todd Belt, Atiba Pertilla, Walter Dean, and Dante Chinni. 2007. *We Interrupt this Newscast... How to Improve Local News and Win Ratings, Too*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN# 978-0-521-69154-3.

You are required to read from the above texts as part of your coursework. All of the above listed books will be available for purchase in the university bookstore. Additionally, one copy of each book will be placed on reserve in the Mo'okini Library, so you need not necessarily purchase them. In addition, handouts will be distributed in class as required reading, and students are required to follow current political affairs in a national newspaper (many are available free of charge on-line). Students who purchase a new copy of the Rosensteil et al. book will be reimbursed for the royalties from the book (\$1), please show me the book and a receipt.

Student Responsibilities

Beyond learning the course material, there are only three responsibilities that I place on all students in this course:

- 1. Turn assignments in on time.** This class has deadlines that need to be met and exams that must be taken. Turn the assignments in on time. You must take the exams when they are scheduled unless you have a valid excuse (see below for the late assignment and exam scheduling policies). *Do not email assignments.* The following are examples of "excuses" I have received that are in no way valid:

"I lost my pen drive."	"This isn't the only class I have, you know."
"My computer crashed."	"I can't find someone to watch my kids."
"My nose job got infected."	"I'm taking my kids snowboarding on Mauna Kea."
"I can't get motivated to do it."	"I have to work."
"My child is sick."	"I have a doctor's appointment."
"I had printer problems."	"I'm having personal problems."
"But, my parents were in town."	"I would have had to come back early from my trip to Kona."
	"My chinchilla died and I was emotionally distressed."
- 2. Be courteous.** I hope and expect that we will have lively political discussions in this class. You are encouraged to disagree with other students and even the professor as long as it is done in a courteous manner. Turn off all electronic devices before class. Do not bring children or other animals to class. Do not pack up your belongings while class is still in session (see below for student conduct policy).
- 3. Do not cheat.** Cheating will result in an "F" for the course, not just the assignment or exam upon which the student cheated (see below for academic integrity policy).

Evaluation Method and Grading Policy

Students will be evaluated by the instructor and will receive a letter grade for each of the following:

Participation	15%
Written Assignment	10% (Two, worth 5% each)
Exams	50% (Two, worth 25% each)
Content Analysis Paper	25% (20% written, 5% oral)

- 1. Participation:** You are not *required* to show up for class, but your contributions to class discussion will form part of your final grade. This is a seminar-style course, and students will be required to participate at all meetings as well as give an oral presentation of their research findings. Participation includes the quality and frequency of individual students' contributions to classroom discussion. I follow an "active learning" approach in my classes—simply reading the texts is not a substitute for classroom discussion and learning. In order to

participate well in this class, you must pay close attention to assignments and deadlines (all of which are listed in this syllabus). You must complete all assigned readings for the week prior to coming to class on the first meeting of the week. If you are a shy person, now is your chance to work on your shyness and learn how to speak in front of others. Attendance will be taken for administrative purposes only and is not factored into your grade except that your ability to participate will be disadvantaged by too many missed classes. Missing classes can be very detrimental to your ability to learn the course material. If you miss a class, it is your own responsibility to learn the material and catch up by the next class meeting.

2. **Assignments.** Assignments must be typed, double-spaced and turned in as a hard copy, they *may not* be emailed. Do not show up to class with a diskette and attempt to explain why you have not yet printed your assignment. Always back-up your computer files in at least two places. Any assignments turned in after the first 10 minutes of class will be treated as late by one day. Late assignments will be deducted one full letter grade for every class meeting they are late (turn them in to me directly). Assignment sheets specifying requirements will be distributed in class and will be posted on the class website. They will not be emailed. See me during class or during my office hours if you missed any. As a student, it is your responsibility to keep track of due dates and to follow up on missed assignments. Telling the instructor that you “did not know” about a course requirement is *not* an acceptable excuse, it is academic negligence.

3. **Examinations.** There are two examinations (one midterm and one during finals week). The examinations are not cumulative, and they may include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Make-up exams are rarely given and only when a university-authorized excuse is provided. These excuses include illness, religious holiday or a death in the family only. Make-up exams will not include multiple choice questions. You will not be excused from an exam simply because you missed the prior class or because the exam interferes with your work schedule. Do not make plans to leave town before the final exam. Any requests for a makeup exam must be made *before* the exam is given (call me). You will not be permitted to take a make-up exam if you do not request one before the exam is given. If you wear a hat with a brim on the day of an examination, you will be asked to remove it. If you have a disability that warrants additional consideration for examinations, please inform me so that I can accommodate you (also, see the “Note on Disability Services” below).

4. **Content Analysis Paper.** The content analysis paper will comprise a write-up of an individual research project that you will undertake for this course. Your research project will be to analyze the media coverage of an issue of your choice across two different media outlets (specific instructions will be given in a handout).

The instructor’s evaluation of student performance will be guided by the following table:

Evaluation	Exam Points	Grade	Grade Points
Excellent	93-100	A	4.0
	90-92	A-	3.7
	87-89	B+	3.3
Good	83-86	B	3.0
	80-82	B-	2.7
	77-79	C+	2.3
Satisfactory	73-76	C	2.0
	70-72	C-	1.7
Poor	60-69	D	1.0
Failure	59 and below	F	0.0

- In order to earn an Excellent (A) grade, a student must demonstrate mastery of all of the factual material, be able to apply and in fully integrate theories and concepts, and demonstrate clear organization of ideas and arguments.

- In order to earn a Good (B) grade, a student must demonstrate mastery of nearly all of the factual material, demonstrate some application and integration of theories and concepts, and demonstrate clear organization of ideas and arguments.

- In order to earn a Satisfactory (C) grade, a student must demonstrate mastery of most of the factual material and demonstrate clear organization of ideas and arguments.
- In order to earn a Poor (D) grade, a student must demonstrate mastery of most of the factual material.
- In order to earn a Failing (F) grade, a student must not demonstrate adequate knowledge of the factual material.

Grade weighting method: The grade a student receives for each requirement will be converted to grade points and weighted by the corresponding percentage (see above). The final value will be rounded to the closest Grade Point assignment and the corresponding grade will be recorded as the student's final grade in the course. Here is an example: Suppose Stephanie earned a B+ for Participation, for her Assignments she earned an A- and B-, she earned a B+ and B on her Exams, and an A- for her Content Analysis Paper and a B+ for her Content Analysis Oral Presentation. Her final grade would be calculated as follows:

$$\text{Final Grade} = (3.3 * .15) + (3.7 * .05) + (2.7 * .05) + (3.3 * .25) + (3.0 * .25) + (3.7 * .20) + (3.3 * .05)$$

$$\text{Final Grade} = .330 + .370 + .270 + .330 + .495 + .405 + 1.110$$

Final Grade = 3.310, which is closest to 3.3 grade points, which is equivalent to a B+.

Note: Your final grade will be available on the "My UH" web portal after the semester. *I do not email grades.* Failure to take an exam or to turn in an Internship Project/Term Paper will result in an F for the missed component plus a one full letter grade reduction in the student's final course grade.

Other Course Policies and Notes

Add / Drop Policy

You may add the class prior to Friday, 1/18 at 12:00 midnight. If there are still openings available after that time, I will add students at the beginning of the second week (Wednesday, 1/23). You must be present to add. Graduating Senior Political Science Majors will be given priority if there are not enough spaces in the class.

Grade Options Policy

Students may take this course for Credit / No Credit, but they must exercise this option on or before Friday, 2/1. The last day to withdraw without a "W" is 2/3. Incompletes are rarely given and only in cases of an emergency and provided that the student has completed at least half of the course requirements and is earning a C- or better.

Student Consultation Policy (Office Hours)

Students are my highest priority. I want every student to do well. I am *always* happy to meet with students who need help. I do not answer questions about the class via email, see me directly before or after class or during my office hours. You may use email to schedule an appointment. My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus, and I am available for drop-in consultation at that time. If you need to see me but can not make it during my normal office hours, please schedule an appointment with me. Sometimes my office door is left open at other times during the week, and you can drop-in to talk if it is. If my door is closed, I may or may not be available to speak with you (please knock to find out). When I am not working on course material or grading, I am often busy in my office doing research or helping to improve the university through such things as committee work. For these reasons it is best to meet with me during regular office hours or during a scheduled appointment so that we are not disturbed and I can give you my undivided attention. If you want to schedule an appointment with me, you may see me before or after class, call me or email me. When you email me to schedule an appointment, please be sure to say who you are and the class in which you are enrolled.

Student Conduct Policy

Students who engage in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave class immediately. Disruptive behavior consists of, among other things, frequent talking with other students during lectures and presentations, eating, and electronic noises. Turn off all pagers, phones and other electronic devices prior to entering the classroom. If you have an electronic device that emits noise during class you will be asked to leave—no excuses and no exceptions. Do not pack up your belongings before class is dismissed, this is extremely disrespectful. Do not bring children or other animals to class.

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic honesty is required of all students. Each student is responsible for understanding and following campus policies on academic honesty. Academic dishonesty defrauds all those who depend on the integrity of University courses and is a serious offense. The UHH Catalog defines academic dishonesty as:

“Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to: submitting, to satisfy an academic requirement, any document that has been copied in whole or in part from another individual’s work without identifying that individual; neglecting to identify as a quotation a documented idea that has not been assimilated into the student’s language and style, or paraphrasing a passage so closely that the reader is misled as to the source; submitting the same written or oral material in more than one course without obtaining authorization from the instructors involved; or drylabbing, which includes (a) obtaining and using experimental data from other students without the express consent of the instructor, (b) utilizing experimental data and laboratory write-ups from other sections of the course or from previous terms during which the course was conducted, and (c) fabricating data to fit the expected results” (p. 66).

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Note that submitting the same paper for more than one course *without the prior approval of both instructors* is considered to be a case of academic dishonesty. You must use quotation marks (“these things”) if you are directly copying another author’s words. Simply citing the author is not enough unless you are paraphrasing (rewriting the idea in your own words). Copying material off of websites and pasting it in your paper is plagiarism. You are encouraged to paraphrase wherever possible, as it is preferable to using too many quotes. If plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty (including cheating on examinations) is suspected, the incident will be thoroughly investigated. If you are caught cheating in any form or plagiarizing any part of a test, paper, or other assignment, you will receive an “F” for the course (not just the assignment) and may be reported to the University administration for further possible action, including expulsion from the university.

Late Assignment Policy

Writing assignments are due at the beginning of class of the day assigned. Assignments that are turned in during or at the end of class will be treated as late. A late assignment is to be turned in directly to me at the next class meeting (do not slide it under my door or attach it to the clip outside my office door). *Do not email your assignment*. The assignment will be deducted one full letter grade for every class period it is late. Assignment sheets specifying requirements will be distributed in class and will be posted on the class website. They will not be emailed. See me during class or during my office hours if you missed any. As a student, it is your responsibility to keep track of due dates and to follow up on missed assignments. Telling the instructor that you “did not know” about a course requirement is *not* an acceptable excuse, it is academic negligence. Missing assignments or exams will result in an “F” for the assignment plus a full letter grade deduction in the student’s final grade. Thus, it is far better to turn an assignment in late than not to turn it in at all.

Note on Disability Services

I will do everything possible to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability who would like to request accommodations should contact the University Disability Services Office—Hale Kauanoë A Wing Lounge, 933-0816 (V), 933-3334 (TTY), shirachi@hawaii.edu. Please do so as early in the semester as possible.

Note on Academic Advising

Advising is a very important resource designed to help students complete the requirements of the University and their individual majors. Students should consult with their advisor at least once per semester in order to decide upon courses, check progress towards graduation, and discuss their career options and other educational opportunities provided by UH Hilo. Advising is a shared responsibility, but students have the final responsibility for meeting degree requirements. You can your advisor here: <http://www.uhh.hawaii.edu/studentaffairs/advising/advisors>

Course Outline:

Week 1 (1/14-1/16). Public Opinion Polling and Other Measures of Public Opinion

"People only see what they are prepared to see." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Reading: Erickson and Tedin: Chs. 1-2.

- ◆ Understanding Sampling
- ◆ Evolution of Polling
- ◆ Modern Polling Techniques
- ◆ Polling and Democracy
- ◆ Nonattitudes
- ◆ Social Acceptability Bias
- ◆ Wording Problems
- ◆ Order Problems
- ◆ Election Forecasting
- ◆ Exit Polls
- ◆ Premature Poll Releases

Week 2 (1/23). Political Socialization

No Class Monday, 1/21 (Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

"Faced with the choice between changing one's mind and proving that there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy on the proof." -Galbraith's Law

Reading: Erickson and Tedin: Chs. 5-6.

In-class videos: *The Great American Values Test*

- ◆ Political Socialization
- ◆ The Public Opinion Life Cycle
- ◆ Attitude Consistency and Change
- ◆ Support for Democracy
- ◆ Trust in Government
- ◆ Political Efficacy
- ◆ Values

Week 3 (1/28-1/30). What the Polls Tell Us about US Public Opinion: Macro Level

Reading: Erickson and Tedin: Ch. 4.

- ◆ Analysis and Interpretation of Polls
- ◆ Trends in Opinion
- ◆ Macropartisanship
- ◆ Ideology
- ◆ Presidential Approval

Week 4 (2/4-2/6). What the Polls Tell Us about US Public Opinion: Group and Individual Level

"Your world was made for you by someone above, but you choose evil ways instead of love. You made me master of the world where you exist. The soul I took from you was not even missed." -Black Sabbath, from "Lord of this World," c. 1971 Warner Brothers.

Reading: Erickson and Tedin: Chs. 3 and 7; Frank: "The Two Nations" (Handout).

In-class video: "The Monsters are Due on Maple Street" an episode from the TV series *The Twilight Zone* and *The California Reich*

- ◆ Religion
- ◆ Racial Attitudes
- ◆ Ideology
- ◆ Partisanship
- ◆ Issues
- ◆ Civic Attitudes and Alienation
- ◆ "Nation as Family" Metaphor
- ◆ "Red State-Blue State" and Other Absurdly Simplistic Understandings of US Public Opinion

Week 5 (2/11-2/13). Public Opinion and Governance

"The ultimate in vanity, exploiting their supremacy. I can't believe the things you say. I can't believe the price you pay." -Metallica, from ". . . and Justice for All," c. 1988 Elektra.

Reading: Erickson and Tedin: Chs. 9-11.

- ◆ The Role of Parties
- ◆ The Role of Interest Groups
- ◆ The Role of Elections
- ◆ Opinion Leadership
- ◆ Opinion Followership

Week 6 (2/20). Understanding the Nature of the Media and Democracy

No Class Monday, 2/18 (Presidents' Day)

Reading: Graber: Ch. 1.

- ◆ Who are "The Media?"
- ◆ Differing Conceptions of Media
- ◆ Different Qualities of Media
- ◆ Historical Evolution of Mass Media
- ◆ Ownership, Control, and Media Regulation
- ◆ Competing Conceptions of Democracy
- ◆ Democratic Ideals and the Media
- ◆ Media Roles in Spectator vs. Participatory Democracy
- ◆ An Introduction to Content Analysis

Week 7 (2/25-2/27). Propaganda

Written Assignment #1 due on Monday (2/25)

Issue Topic and Media Sources for Content Analysis Paper Due Wednesday (2/27).

Reading: Erickson and Tedin: Ch. 8.

In-class video: Triumph of the Will

In-class presentation: Nazi, Soviet, Chinese and US propaganda

- ◆ William Randolph Hearst
- ◆ Edward Bernays
- ◆ Leni Riefenstahl
- ◆ Joseph Goebbels 19 Principles of Propaganda
- ◆ World War II Propaganda
- ◆ Anti-Communist Propaganda
- ◆ Chomsky's Propaganda Model
- ◆ Contemporary Propaganda

Week 8 (3/3-3/5). Media Influence on Opinion and Behavior

Exam #1 on Monday (3/3)

Reading: Graber: Ch. 7.

- ◆ Magic Bullet
- ◆ Minimal Effects
- ◆ Agenda Setting Theory
- ◆ Framing Theory
- ◆ Metaphor Theory
- ◆ Constructionism
- ◆ Variations by Medium

Week 9 (3/10-3/12). Advertising

*"The failure to see the damage done by advertisements is the surest sign of substandard intelligence, or worse."
-H. G. Wells*

Reading: Rosensteel et al., Chs. 1-3; Calfee: "How Advertising Informs to Our Benefit" (Handout); Baker "The Squeeze" (Handout).

In-class presentation: Subliminal Advertising Techniques, Adbusters

In-class video: Examples of Political Advertising

- ◆ Commercial Advertising
- ◆ "Madison Avenue"
- ◆ Political Advertising
- ◆ Advertising Ethics
- ◆ Subliminal Advertising
- ◆ The Influence of Advertising

Week 10 (3/17). The News, Part 1

No Class on Wednesday (3/19), do Written Assignment #2

Reading: Rosensteel et al., Chs. 4-7.

- ◆ Local News
- ◆ Audience Tastes
- ◆ Sources of News
- ◆ For-profit vs. Non-profit News
- ◆ Journalistic Routines
- ◆ Gatekeeping
- ◆ "Horserace" and "Game" Coverage of Politics

3/24-3/28, Spring Break

Week 11 (3/31-4/2). The News, Part II

Written Assignment #2 due on Monday (3/31)

Reading: Rosensteel et al., Ch. 8; Graber: Ch. 6; Handouts on VNRs, The Valerie Plame Affair, and Jeff Gannon

- ◆ Perceptions of News Bias: The Hostile Media thesis
- ◆ Consumerism and Free Market Ideology
- ◆ The American Dream
- ◆ News Management: VNRs, Leaks, and Plants

Week 12 (4/7-4/9). The Media and the Branches of Government

"One person conditioned to rule and control. The media sell it and you live the role." -O. Osbourne, from "Crazy Train," c. 1981, CBS.

Reading: Kumar, Chs. 1-3.

- ◆ Legislature
- ◆ Courts
- ◆ Executive
- ◆ The President as Chief Spokesperson of the Nation
- ◆ Case Studies of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush

Week 13 (4/14-4/16). The Presidential Media Operation

Reading: Kumar, Chs. 4, 5, and 8.

- ◆ Advisors
- ◆ Press Secretary
- ◆ Media Minders
- ◆ The Daily Briefing
- ◆ Press Conferences
- ◆ Rapid Response

Week 14 (4/21-4/23). The Media Industry

"I used to trust the media to tell us the truth, tell us the truth. Now I see the payoffs everywhere I look. Who do you trust when everyone's a crook?" -Queensrÿche, from "Revolution Calling," c. 1988, EMI.

Reading: Graber: Chs. 2-3; Bagdikian "The Media Monopoly" (Handout)

In-class video: *Outfoxed*

- ◆ 1996 Telecom Act and 2003 FCC Cross-ownership Ruling
- ◆ Media Monopolies and Oligopolies
- ◆ TV: Networks, Syndicators, Cable and Satellite Providers
- ◆ Radio: Viacom and Clear Channel
- ◆ Cross Ownership and "Synergy"
- ◆ Transnational Media Giants
- ◆ Arbitron and Nielsen Ratings Systems
- ◆ Infotainment
- ◆ Advertising Pressure
- ◆ Public Media
- ◆ Media Access and Democratic Discourse

Week 15 (4/28-4/30). Participation through the Media

Content Analysis Paper Due Wednesday (4/30)

"We want the airwaves" -The Ramones, from "We Want the Airwaves," c. 1981, Rhino.

"We're all stars now, in the dope show." -Marilyn Manson, from "The Dope Show," c. 1998, Interscope.

Reading: Graber: Ch. 8.

In-class video: *Culture Jam* and *Guerilla News Network*

- ◆ Radio and TV
- ◆ Internet: Parody Sites, Typo Squatting, Google Bombing
- ◆ Documentary Filmmaking
- ◆ Funding Issues
- ◆ Pamphleting
- ◆ Bumper Stickers and Magnets
- ◆ Art and Music
- ◆ Culture Jamming
- ◆ The Role of Musicians, Actors, and other Celebrities

Week 16 (5/5-5/7). Current and Future Issues in The Media, Public Opinion and Politics

"Politicians hide themselves away. They only started the war. Why should they go out to fight? They leave that role to the poor." -Black Sabbath, from "War Pigs" c. 1970, Warner Brothers

Reading: Graber: Ch. 12.

In-class video: *Copyright*

- ◆ Foreign Affairs Coverage
- ◆ Coverage of the Three Federal Branches of Government
- ◆ State and Local Coverage
- ◆ Crime, Murder, Mayhem
- ◆ Cameras in the Courtrooms
- ◆ FCC oversight of CPB
- ◆ Copyright Issues

Final Examination Wednesday, May 14th, 4:10 – 5:25 pm in our regular classroom.