PS 318
Media, Opinion and Voting
Fall Term 2019
(4 credits)

Instructor: James Hite
Contact: D2L email system

Required Texts
Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice (3rd edition), Rosalee A. Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley
Mass Media and American Politics (10th edition), Doris A. Graber
Additional assigned reading material is required and is noted in the course schedule as Reading Packet (RP). The Reading Packet is available via the link on the course page labeled: Course Content-Reading Packet.

Course Description
The course explores the dynamics of the media, public opinion, voting and elections in the United States; moreover, the relationship that arises between the preceding topics is analyzed in the context of electoral competition, presidential elections and debates, and citizen participation. Particular attention is paid to the role of public opinion polling and how polling data drives candidate behavior, as well as public policy. In addition, the responsibility politicians, the media, and citizens have for civic engagement and electoral politics is examined throughout the term.

Intended Course Outcomes
Students will develop a heightened awareness and understanding of the role that media, public opinion and voting play in American political culture and elections. Furthermore, students will gain an appreciation of the extent of the media’s role in informing the public and its use of language and imagery to influence the nation’s political discourse. In addition, students will become more astute consumers of the media and polling data, thus allowing them to make better informed electoral decisions.

Grading
Grades for the course are based on the following:
Four writing/discussion assignments: 55 possible points each
Midterm exam: 100 possible points
Final Paper: 55 possible points
Total possible points for the course: 375 points

(Course letter grade based on total points earned and then converted to standard percentage scale: 100-90% = A, 89-80% = B, etc.)

Consistent, positive involvement in the discussion forums will be taken into consideration when determining borderline grades.
Although all responses to the writing/discussion assignments will have the same number of possible points, the assignments are not equally extensive, as some will require more effort than others. More importantly, the writing assignments and required participation in the discussion forums are an essential component of the course and are designed to facilitate a broad integration of the course material. Responses to all writing/discussion assignments are required by Wednesday of the week assigned in the syllabus and the initial response must be posted at the Assignment link, as well as at the corresponding Discussion forum. Initially, the writing/discussion assignments are scored in the Assignments section of the course page; scores are adjusted if the required discussion forum participation is not met.

**Expectations for Written Work**

When grading the writing/discussions assignments and the exams, the following criteria are utilized:

- demonstration of critical thinking skills
- application of concise writing skills
- effective integration of course material
- proper citation of material
- attention to grammar and spelling
- active and timely engagement in the weekly writing/discussion assignments

**Coursework Reminders**

Please complete the readings listed in the syllabus and review any films, lecture slides, as well as any additional resources located at the course page on D2L, by the beginning of the week assigned. It is important to plan accordingly and to complete the writing/discussion assignments within the required time frame. Also, articles assigned from the Reading Packet are required unless noted as “recommended.”

It is not a given that late work will be accepted; however, any work submitted after the due date will have an automatic deduction in possible points.

Optimally, and in order to gain a solid understanding of the course material, students need to be actively involved in all facets of the course. As such, all students enrolled in the course need to complete all the required readings and complete all of the writing/discussion assignments, midterm exam, and the final paper. Finally, it is important that all students enrolled in the course are respectful when interacting with other students in the online discussions.
Course Schedule

Week of September 30  
Topic: Media and Political Culture and the Trajectory of Media in the United States  
Readings: *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*, Preface, Chapter 1, Appendix; *Mass Media and American Politics*, Chapter 1  
*RP:* “Framing,” George Lakoff interview  
View online documentary: “John Pilger: Real Journalism”  
Introduction posting due Wednesday October 2

Week of October 7  
Topics: The Trajectory of the Media and Media Influence—Why It Matters; and Media and Regulation  
Readings: *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*, Chapters 2-4; *Mass Media and American Politics*, Chapter 2  
*RP:* “Reality TV as a Trigger of Everyday Political Talk in the Net-based Public Sphere,” Todd Graham  
View online documentary: “London Calling”  
Writing Assignment-Discussion 1 due Wednesday October 9

Week of October 14  
Topics: The Impact of the Media on American Politics and Society; the Media and the Law—From First Amendment Rights to Censorship  
Readings: *Mass Media and American Politics*, Chapter 3  
*RP:* “From Incivility to Outrage: Political Discourse in Blogs, Talk Radio, and Cable News,” Sarah Sobieraj and Jeffrey M. Berry; “The Effects of Campaign Spending in State Supreme Court Elections,” Chris W. Bonneau (recommended)  
View online video: CNN “The Constitution”  
Writing Assignment-Discussion 2 due Wednesday October 16

Week of October 21  
Topics: The Methodology of Polling for Public Opinion; Reporting and the Media's Obligation to the Public; Pluralism and Public Opinion; the Media as Policymakers  
Readings: *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*, Chapters 5-7; *Mass Media and American Politics*, Chapters 4-7  
*RP:* “Infotainment and the Moral Obligations of the Multimedia Conglomerate,” Mary Lyn Stoll (recommended)

Week of October 28  
Midterm exam due Wednesday October 30
Week of November 4
Topic: Media, Polling, Public Opinion and the Institutions of Government—The Symbiotic Relationship Examined
Readings: Mass Media and American Politics, Chapters 8-10
View online video: C-Span “The Supreme Court and the Media”

Week of November 11
Topic: Voting and Elections—The Outcomes of Elections and What It Means to Politics, Policy, and Democracy in the United States
Readings: Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice, Chapters 8-10; Mass Media and American Politics, review Chapter 8
View online video: CNN “Presidential Trip”
Writing Assignment-Discussion 3 due Wednesday November 13

Week of November 18
Topic: Overview: History of Voting and Elections in the United States
Readings: Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice, Chapters 11-12

Week of November 25
Topic: The Rise of the Internet and What It Means to Politics, Elections, and the Political Culture of the United States
Readings: Mass Media and American Politics, Chapter 11
RP: “Political Culture Revisited,” Lucian W. Pye
Writing Assignment-Discussion 4 due Wednesday November 27

Week of December 2
Topic: Theories of Media, Opinion and Voting
Readings: Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice, Chapter 13; Mass Media and American Politics, Chapter 12
RP: “Task Analyzability, Use of New Media, and Effectiveness: A Multi-Site Exploration of Media Richness,” Ronald E. Rice (recommended); “News Consumption and Media Bias,” by Yi Xiang and Miklos Sarvary (recommended)
**Course Communication**
The best way to communicate with the instructor is via the D2L email system.

**Academic Honesty**
All written material should be submitted in your own words and properly cited when you use the work of another. Any academic dishonesty is only a disservice to your education; and punishment for academic dishonesty will be dictated by the guidelines delineated by Portland State University and the Student Code of Conduct.

**Policy on Incomplete Grades**
The following is the PSU policy on what constitutes giving an incomplete for those students who request an incomplete grade.

1. An incomplete can be given when a student’s work has been satisfactory but the student has a small amount of work to make up, e.g., one exam, a paper, or other assignment.

2. An incomplete can only be initiated with instructor approval.

**PROVIDING ACADEMIC AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT TO STUDENTS**
PSU is committed to providing students with an educational environment where students may thrive in their educational pursuits. Incidents of interpersonal violence or sexual harassment may create barriers to students completing their education. We at Portland State support students to help them overcome these barriers. PSU’s Dean of Student Life, Title IX Coordinator, Interpersonal Violence (IPV) Advocates and CARE team are committed to assisting students who have experienced any form of sexual harassment or interpersonal violence.

*Title IX of the Educational Act of 1972* requires educational institutions (PSU) to provide academic and employment support to students and/or employees, including student employees, who experience sexual harassment, sexual assault or any other form of interpersonal violence. Academic and employment support includes, but is not limited to,

- Providing additional time to complete assignments or to take exams;
- Completing the course without attending the lectures;
- Providing academic support, such as tutoring;
- Arranging to have extra time to complete or re-take a course or withdraw from a course without an academic or financial penalty;
- Providing a No Contact Order (NCO) between the victim and the alleged perpetrator, where the victim and the alleged perpetrator may not contact each other;
- Changing the alleged perpetrator or the victim’s course to prevent both students from being in the same course;
- Providing excused absence from employment with PSU for a reasonable time; and
- Changing hours of employment or department of employment at PSU.
PSU must provide these academic and/or employment supports whether or not the student decides to report the matter to Office of the Dean of Student Life or the Office of Equity and Compliance. An IPV Confidential Advocate, the CARE Team Case Manager, the Assistant Dean/Director of Conduct and Community Standards or the Title IX Coordinator may contact a faculty member/instructor and/or a supervisor to arrange for academic and/or employment support for a student or employee who has experienced interpersonal violence. If a faculty member or supervisor has any questions about providing the academic or employment support, the faculty member should contact PSU’s Title IX and 504/ADA Coordinator, Julie Caron, at jucaron@pdx.edu or 5-4410.

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities
PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. One of the goals of the class is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify the instructor. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503–725–4150, drc@pdx.edu, https://www.pdx.edu/drc.

- If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.
- Students who need accommodations for tests and quizzes are expected to schedule their tests to overlap with the time the class is taking the test.
- Please be aware that the accessible tables or chairs in the room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not useable.
- For information about emergency preparedness, please go to the Fire and Life Safety webpage(https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety) for information.