Version 1.1

DR MATHIAS KLANG

NEWS MEDIA AND POLITICAL POWER

The news media are sometimes called the fourth branch of government—and for good reason. Much of our exposure to politics comes not from direct experience but from mediated stories. This course is designed to help you think about this relationship between the news media and politics. We will explore how news organizations decide what is news, how they report it, how those reports have an impact on viewers or readers, and ultimately, the political system.

Course Schedule
Tu & Th 12:30-13:35
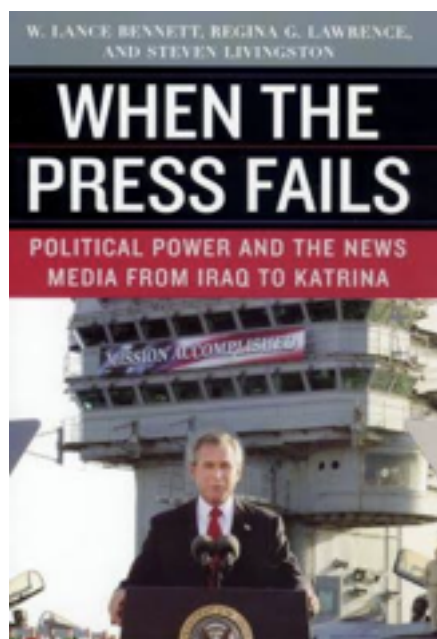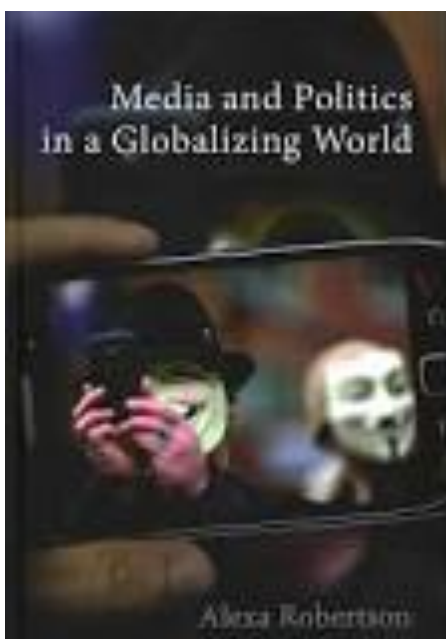*Wheatley W01-0012*

Textbooks
Bennett et al. (2007) When the Press Fails, Uni of Chicago Press.

Robertson, A. (2015) Media and Politics in a Globalized World. Polity Press.

Other materials will be made available via the course website on Blackboard.

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Office Hrs: Tu&Th 11-12pm

New Media

"Major technological innovations transformed the mass media. Radio, already overwhelmed by television, transformed itself into a niche service. It developed an important political dimension based on Talk radio. Television survived with a much reduced audience, but remained the number one advertising medium for election campaigns. Newspapers Were in desperate trouble; most afternoon papers closed, and most morning papers barely survived, as the Internet undermined both their advertising and their news reporting.

The new social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, made use first of the personal computer and the Internet, and after 2010 of the smart phones to connect hundreds of millions of people, especially those under age 35. By 2008, politicians and interest groups were experimenting with systematic use of social media to spread their message among much larger audiences than they had previously reached.

As political strategists turn their attention to the 2016 presidential contest, they identify Facebook as an increasingly important advertising tool. Recent technical innovations have made possible more advanced divisions and subdivisions of the electorate. Most important, Facebook can now deliver video ads to small, highly targeted subsets. Television, by contrast, shows the same commercials to all viewers, and so cannot be precisely tailored."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/
Mass_media_and_American_politics

Grading

Comparative Media Study	*90 points*	*Apr 9*
Four short texts	*80 points*	
Attendance	*30 points*	
Discussion Lead	*70 points*	
Final Project	*130 points*	*May 12*

The total amount of points awarded in the course is 400. The grade is based on the following percentage scale:

A 94 or above   A- 90 – 93
B+ 87 –89   B 83 – 86   B- 80 – 82
C+ 77 – 79   C 73 – 76   C- 70 – 72
D+ 67 – 69   D 63 – 66   D- 60 – 62
F 59 or below.

Networked Fourth Estate

"The Fourth Estate (or fourth power) is a societal or political force or institution whose influence is not consistently or officially recognized. "Fourth Estate" most commonly refers to the news media, especially print journalism or "the press". Thomas Carlyle attributed the origin of the term to Edmund Burke, who used it in a parliamentary debate in 1787 on the opening up of press reporting of the House of Commons of Great Britain…

Yochai Benkler, author of the 2006 book The Wealth of Networks, described the "Networked Fourth Estate" in a May 2011 paper published in the Harvard Civil Liberties Review. His explains the growth of non-traditional journalistic media on the Internet and how it affects the traditional press using Wikileaks as an example. When Benkler was asked to testify in the United States vs. PFC Bradley E. Manning trial, in his statement to the morning 10 July 2013 session of the trial he described the Networked Fourth Estate as the set of practices, organizing models, and technologies that are associated with the free press and provide a public check on the branches of government. It differs from the traditional press and the traditional fourth estate in that it has a diverse set of actors instead of a small number of major presses. These actors include small for-profit media organizations, non-profit media organizations, academic centers, and distributed networks of individuals participating in the media process with the larger traditional organizations"

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_Estate

Deadlines.

All assignments and exams must be completed and turned in on or before the date assigned. Writing assignments are posted separately in Blackboard and must be submitted through SafeAssign. If you fail to turn in an assignment on time you will lose 10% of your total grade for each day it is late. Assignments that are more than five days late will not be accepted and you will receive a grade of ZERO for that assignment.

Attendance.

Attendance is mandatory. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, you are responsible for obtaining class materials (e.g., notes, assignments) on your own.
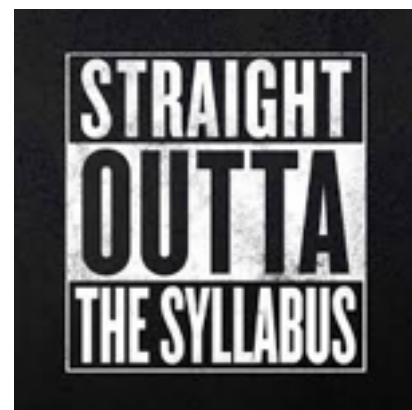
Attendance also means that the participant is on time and engaged in the discussion. Non-attendance and non-participation will negatively impact your final grade.

All participants are encouraged to question and challenge the ideas being presented and discussed. Please remember that people and ideas must be treated with respect. Avoid disruptive behavior.

You are expected to contribute to classroom discussions. You are expected to demonstrate respectful attention to the speaker (whether the speaker is the instructor, a guest, or another student).

Class Cancellation.

Should classes be cancelled due to extreme weather or other unforeseen circumstances the classes will be conducted online via Blackboard.

Readings.

Readings must be completed before the day they are assigned on the course schedule. Be sure to do the readings in light of the discussion questions and take notes while reading.

Digital Devices.

Laptops and other devices may be used for taking notes. However, using devices for activities not related to the class is not permitted.

Turn your cell phones off when you enter the classroom unless you have prior approval from the instructor.

Academic integrity.

Students are required to adhere to the University Policy on Academic Standards and Cheating, to the University Statement on Plagiarism and the Documentation of Written Work, and to the Code of Student Conduct as delineated in the Catalog of Undergraduate Programs. The Code is available online. https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/community/code

Accommodations.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 offers guidelines and support for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. If applicable, students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Ross Center for Disability Services, Campus Center, Upper Level, Room 0211, 617-287-7430. The student must present these recommendations and discuss them with each professor within a reasonable period, preferably by the end of Drop/Add period.

Schedule.

Changes to the syllabus may be made at the instructors discretion and if circumstances require. Participants will be notified of changes via Blackboard. Participants are responsible for keeping up to date with these changes.

SCHEDULE: READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Week 1 Tu, Jan 26 Th, Jan 28	Tu: Course Introduction Th: Amusing Ourselves to Death: Read chapters 2 & 11 https://libcom.org/files/Neil%20Postman%20-%20Amusing%20Ourselves%20to%20Death.pdf
Week 2 Tu, Feb 2 Th, Feb 4	Tu: DISCUSSION Bennett Chap 1: Press Politics in America Th: Lecture "Press, Politics and Postman"
Week 3 Tu, Feb 9 Th, Feb 11	TEXT 1: ANALYSIS DUE FEB 8 Tu: DISCUSSION Bennett Chap 2: Semi-independent press Th: DISCUSSION Bennett Chap 3: None dare call it torture
Week 4 Tu, Feb 16 Th, Feb 18	Tu: DISCUSSION Bennett Chap 5: Managing the News Th: Lecture "Media & Politics in a Globalized World"
Week 5 Tu, Feb 23 Th, Feb 25	Social Media Week Clay Shirky The Political Power of Social Media http://www.cc.gatech.edu/~beki/cs4001/Shirky.pdf "Digital Maoism: The Hazards of the New Online Collectivism", by Lanier in Edge.org http://bit.ly/OcpWAM
Week 6 Tu, Mar 1 Th, Mar 3	TEXT 2: ANALYSIS DUE FEB 29 Tu: DISCUSSION Robertson chap 1 & 2 p 3-34 Th: DISCUSSION Robertson chap 3 p 35-67
Week 7 Tu, Mar 8 Th, Mar 10	RESEARCH QUESTION DUE MAR 8 Tu: Lecture "Audience or Citizen Media?" (Robertson Chap 5) Th: DISCUSSION Robertson chap 4
Week 8 Mar 15-17	SPRING BREAK

SCHEDULE

Week 9 Tu, Mar 22 Th, Mar 24	TEXT 3: ABSTRACT DUE MARCH 21 Tu: DISCUSSION Research Questions Th: DISCUSSION Research Questions
Week 10 Tu, Mar 29 Th, Mar 31	WikiLeaks: Power Shifts Khatchadourian "No Secrets: Julian Assange's mission for total transparency," The New Yorker. http://nyr.kr/MsTkCm Lanier "The Hazards of Nerd Supremacy: The Case of WikiLeaks" The Atlantic. http://bit.ly/MsTgmf
Week 11 Tu, Apr 5 Th, Apr 7	TEXT 4: ANALYSIS DUE APR 4 Tu: DISCUSSION Robertson chap 6 Th: DISCUSSION Robertson chap 7
Week 12 Tu, Apr 12 Th, Apr 14	Does Technology Bring Change? The Role of Social Media in Mobilizing Political Protest https://www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/DP_10.2012.pdf Morozov The Net Delusion Chap 1 https://tropicaline.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/netdelusion.pdf
Week 13 Tu, Apr 19 Th, Apr 21	Tu: Lecture "Analysis of a Failure" Th: DISCUSSION Robertson chap 8
Week 14 Tu, Apr 26 Th, Apr 28	Technology Limitations Tu: DISCUSSION The Filter Bubble http://hci.stanford.edu/courses/cs047n/readings/The_Filter_Bubble.pdf Nicholas Carr Is Google Making Us Stupid? http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/matnat/ifi/INF3700/v12/undervisningsmateriale/Is%20Google%20Making%20Us%20Stupid.pdf Th: Lecture "Bubbles & Daily Me & TechnoStupidity"
Week 15 Tu, May 3 Th, May 5	Tu: DISCUSSION Robertson chap 9 Th: DISCUSSION Robertson chap 10
Week 15: Tu, May 10	Conclusion

Four Short Texts

Text length 400-500 words. Summarize (highlight the main arguments of) the readings for the week.

Analyze/evaluate (tear apart, react to, find problems or contradictions with, give strengths of, explain why you agree or disagree with) the readings.

Synthesize (place in relation to, bring together themes with, say what one author would say to another) that week's readings with the previous week's.

Text 1: due February 8th

Bennett chapters 2 and 3. Instructions see above.

Text 2: due February 29th

Robertson chap 1, 2 & 3. Instructions see above.

Text 3: due March 21st

Abstract for final project. Text length 500 words. Must include 3 academic and 3 non-academic sources.

Text 4: due April 4th

Robertson chap 6 & 7. Instructions see above.

"Read no history: nothing but biography, for that is life without theory." Benjamin Disraeli

The Abstract due March 21st

Motivation:
Why do we care about the problem and the results? If the problem isn't obviously "interesting" it might be better to put motivation first; but if your work is incremental progress on a problem that is widely recognized as important, then it is probably better to put the problem statement first to indicate which piece of the larger problem you are breaking off to work on. This section should include the importance of your work, the difficulty of the area, and the impact it might have if successful.

Problem statement:
What problem are you trying to solve? What is the scope of your work (a generalized approach, or for a specific situation)? Be careful not to use too much jargon. In some cases it is appropriate to put the problem statement before the motivation, but usually this only works if most readers already understand why the problem is important.

Approach:
How did you go about solving or making progress on the problem? Did you use simulation, analytic models, prototype construction, or analysis of field data for an actual product? What was the extent of your work (did you look at one application program or a hundred programs in twenty different programming languages?) What important variables did you control, ignore, or measure?

Results:
What's the answer? Specifically, most good computer architecture papers conclude that something is so many percent faster, cheaper, smaller, or otherwise better than something else. Put the result there, in numbers. Avoid vague, hand-waving results such as "very", "small", or "significant." If you must be vague, you are only given license to do so when you can talk about orders-of-magnitude improvement. There is a tension here in that you should not provide numbers that can be easily misinterpreted, but on the other hand you don't have room for all the caveats.

Conclusions:
What are the implications of your answer? Is it going to change the world (unlikely), be a significant "win", be a nice hack, or simply serve as a road sign indicating that this path is a waste of time (all of the previous results are useful). Are your results general, potentially generalizable, or specific to a particular case?

BROADCAST 550 600 700 800 900 1000 1200 1400 1600 BROADCAST

Comparative Media Study

Long Assignment: You will write a1000 word paper comparing and contrasting news content across organizations.

Part 1: Pick a news story and follow it across three different types of news media (web, newspaper, radio, television)

Part 2: Pick a news story and view it in one American, one British, and one non-American/non-British news website.

Answer the following questions in your analysis:
- Describe the three news organizations in terms of their size, ownership and audience. Answering this question may require some library research.
- Did the three news organizations emphasize different stories? What was the most prominent story for each? Did one organization cover a story that another completely ignored? What explanation do you have for any differences in emphasis that you found?
- How did coverage of the same story differ across the organizations? Why might this be?

- Did you detect any political bias in any of the media? What evidence leads you to this conclusion?
- What major differences, if any, did you detect across news organization? What might account for the differences or similarities you identified?
-In your opinion, which news organization did the best job conveying political information? Why?
Be sure that you relate your discussion to the materials that we have read and discussed in class, and cite all sources using a generally accepted standard of citation.

Discussion Lead Assignment

Students will be required to lead one class discussion this term.

Discussion Leads consist of groups of 2-3 students who will work together to construct a discussion prompt/question for the class.

Discussion prompts/questions should be contextualized by a 10-15 minute presentation on an aspect of the reading or a related topic to the reading that directs the class to think meaningfully about the discussion question.

Groups will be determined by students via signing up for which week's discussion you are interested in leading.

Each group will earn one grade; all students within that group will earn the same grade for their group's work.

The only exception to this rule is if a student in a Discussion Lead Group does not show for their Group's Lead day. Any students not present and actively involved in their Group's presentation will receive a zero for the assignment.

Discussion Lead Guidelines

Your presentation should not provide an indepth review of all the reading material assigned for that class meeting. Ten minutes is not enough time to review pages of dense theoretical work. Choose one theme or idea that stands out to you.

Novice: You could summarize an idea to the best of your ability, and then introduce a related discussion question.

Proficient: You could make an effort to explain the significance of an idea then and/or now, and then introduce a related discussion question.

Advanced: You could demonstrate how to apply an idea - perhaps by showing how it is still relevant to our lives today by making a connection to something current that exemplifies this idea, and then introduce a related discussion question.

You are expected to reference section(s) of the material that are relevant to your

discussion question you want us to engage in - this is highly recommended as it is constructive to "frame" the discussion; however, you are not to overview the entirety of the course readings due that day.

You are welcome to use/show multimedia that departs from the reading but is related in some way. This aids us all in applying the reading to make new or more culturally current connections, or perhaps posing provocative questions to get us to think about the reading in a different way.

Video clips may not be longer than 1/3 of your presentation time.
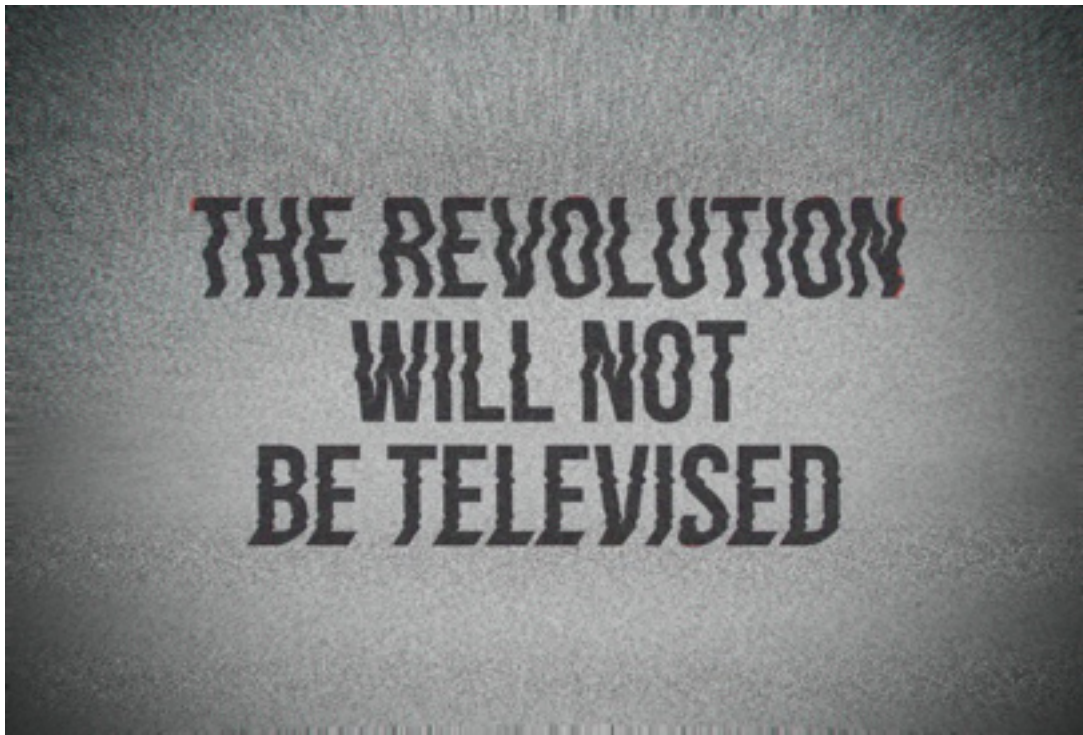
You are more than welcome to quote sections of the reading to draw our attention to specific ideas.

However:

Do not read verbatim the text on a slide to us - we are capable of reading it for ourselves.

A good alternative option is to paraphrase any text written on a slide.

The best option is to use (relevant) images, graphs, or content and then *tell us* what would have otherwise been written on the slide.

Finally, try to think of questions that don't have "easy" answers but make us think about the material in constructive ways. This is a difficult assignment do not take it lightly. Be prepared and try your best. When in doubt contact me in advance.
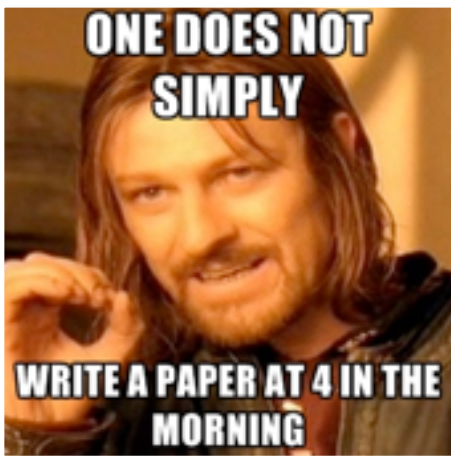
Final Paper

The final paper is an original piece of research. The topic must be within the parameters of the course and is chosen by the participant, and approved of by the instructor. The paper is to be double spaced, 2500 words in length, not including footnotes or bibliography. The paper is worth up to 100 points.

- Find a question that interests you, try to be unique. Pick a research question early. Make sure it fits the assignment.

Find Make sure to come up with a topic that is a good fit for the assignment. If you struggle choosing a topic, conduct some brainstorming and seek suggestions from your instructor.

- Prepare an outline with the question, some ideas it may include and an early analysis. Add some sources. Don't be too detailed since your ideas might change as you conduct research and write the essay. After you've finished an outline, don't hesitate running it by your instructor.

- You must support the claim made in your essay with evidence. Claims can be supported with empirical evidence, expert opinion, and logical anecdotes.

Good essays contain catchy introductions: Explain to the reader why this is an important topic.

- Make sure your thesis statement is clear and that it provides a preview of what your paper will address.

- Use reliable and authoritative references and sources for your paper.

- Get rid of any B.S. Instructors will dock your paper for irrelevant information used to fill space.

- Don't plagiarize.

- If you're struggling, get help.