COMM 1A: MASS MEDIA,
SOCIETY, AND
DEMOCRACY

FALL QUARTER, 2015-2016

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Teaching Assistants: Tobias Konitzer
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2015-2016

Building 300: Room 300, MW 1.30-2.50
Outline

Course requirements

Focus: media as a political institution

Course topics overview
Requirements

**Exams**
- Two exams – midterm and non-cumulative final (100 points each)

**Paper**
- Research paper – based on an original content analysis of a news source monitored over five days (6-8 pages, worth 140 points); paper proposal deadline – Nov 2

**Participation**
- Participation in Comm. Dept. experiments subject pool (5 points)
- Section participation (25 points)

**Overall Grade**
- A = 93 percent, B = 85 percent, C = 75 percent
### Media as a Political ("fourth branch") Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Political Autonomy</strong></th>
<th>• Maintain independence from government and political advocacy organizations</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Watchdog Function</strong></td>
<td>• Monitor the actions of government, civil society institutions &amp; officials</td>
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<td><strong>Public Sphere (Informed Public)</strong></td>
<td>• Deliver information on issues of the day, provide exposure to a wide range of political and cultural perspectives</td>
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<td><strong>Electoral Forum</strong></td>
<td>• Permit candidates, parties and other groups opportunities to make campaign presentations before a mass audience</td>
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I. Information as Power

Weeks 1-3; Limits on Press Freedom; Ownership and Censorship

Ownership and control of the news media distinguishes democratic from authoritarian regimes

Considerable variability in press freedom
- US ranks 26th in latest Freedom House scoring on a 0-100 scale

Similar variability in extent and enforcement of censorship in non-democratic states
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Elite Influence over Media

- Dictators seek to control the flow of information
  - Especially sources that command a large audience
  - i.e. broadcast networks (Fujimori and Putin case studies)

- Technology has made media less controllable
  - Monitoring social media requires a vast censorship apparatus (China)

- Elites in democracies
  - Also attempt to manipulate the media and influence public’s access to information
Elite Influence (cont.)

National security as an exception to the “no prior restraint” rule

• Evolution of wartime coverage from Vietnam to today

Limits on adversarial journalism

• Does a free press deter corruption in high places?

The special case of money and elections

• The appearance of corruption
II. The “Public Sphere”

Week 4-5; The Public Sphere; Information Markets and the Commercialization of News

Oct 7: GUEST LECTURE by Prof. James Fishkin

Fishkin, Luskin & Siu, *Europolis and the European public sphere: Empirical explorations of a counterfactual ideal*

Fishkin, Kousser, Luskin & Siu, *Deliberative Agenda Setting: Piloting Reform of Direct Democracy in California*

Oct 12

Patterson, *Doing Well and Doing Good*; Zaller, *Market Demand for Civic Affairs News*; Uribe & Gunter, *The Tabloidization of British Tabloids*; Hallin, *Sound Bite Democracy*
Oct 14  **GUEST LECTURE by Prof. Jay Hamilton**

Hamilton, *All The News That’s Fit to Sell*

Oct 19

Iyengar & Hahn, *The Political Economy of Mass Media: Implications for Democratic Citizenship*

Kull, Ramsay & Lewis, *Misperceptions, the Media, and the Iraq War*

Pew Research Center, *What the Public Knows about the Political Parties*
The “Public Sphere”

Media as contributors to the “public sphere”
- A marketplace of ideas and points of view

Market pressures and the need for “public service” requirements

Programming differences between public and commercial broadcasters, implications for informed citizenship

Level of political awareness
- Europeans versus Americans

Partisan media, biased news, and misinformation

Can voters become enlightened?
- Shortcuts to knowledge; “deliberative polling”
Oct 26 – Media Treatment of Race

Nov. 2 – Gender Stereotypes

Representations of Society

Commercial media and cultural hegemony

Market pressures lead to absence of diversity and reinforcement of group stereotypes
• Case studies of crime and poverty news

Coverage of women candidates

Effects of media messages on Americans’ racial and gender attitudes
• New forms of racism and sexism
IV. New Media, Selective Exposure and Polarization

Nov. 4, 9- Iyengar & Hahn, Red Media, Blue Media; LaCour & Vavreck, Improving Media Measurement Evidence from the Field; Iyengar & Westwood, Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization; Pew Research Center, Political Polarization in the American Public; Fiorina, America’s Missing Moderates Hiding in Plain Sight; Pew Research enter, How Social Media is Reshaping News; Messing & Westwood, Selective Exposure in the Age of Social Media
Media and Polarization

New media
- The advent of consumer choice

The revival of selective exposure
- Do people tune out opposing points of view?
- The ongoing debate over party polarization in the U.S.

America as a divided nation - Alternative definitions of polarization
- Ideology versus affect

Online social networks as news providers
New Media and Collective Action

By lowering coordination costs, has technology enabled “smart mobs,” facilitated protest movements and democratization?

The case of the Arab Spring
- Social media and protest behavior in Egypt and Tunisia

Cell phones, information provision and agricultural markets in developing societies
VI. Media and Elections

Nov 18, 30 - Issenberg, *Death of the hunch*; Wesleyan Media Project, *2012 Shatters 2004 and 2008 Records for Total Ads Aired*;


Iyengar & Simon, *New Perspectives and Evidence on Political Communication and Campaign Effects*
Media and Elections

Candidates as strategic actors

Different channels of campaign communication

How has technology altered campaigns

How do campaigns affect voters? Turnout and Choice