**POL 319: Media & Politics**

Fall 2019

Dr. Laura C. Bucci ([Lbucci@sju.edu](mailto:Lbucci@sju.edu))

Tuesday & Thursday: Barbelin/Lonergan Hall 306, 3:30-4:45 PM

Webpage: Canvas

Office/Hours: Barbelin 212 T/Th 2-3:15 & By Appointment

**Course Description:**

Media serves a fundamental role in American society to inform the general public and maintain accountability from political elites. Yet, today, the media faces a number of very serious challenges: symbiotic relationship between politicians and the press, declining trust in the press as an institution, horse-race politics run amok, pressures from economic competition, separation of political information into partisan political information, and an opting out of news consumption all together. The media serves a critical role, and if we were to judge how things are going--- *it’s not great*.

In this course we will study how the media structures political information, it’s incentives for getting us to stay tuned and to click articles. We will also spend much of the course thinking about *media effects* – how *we* consume political information and make sense of it. In understanding how people consume political information, we will also spend some time thinking about how to ask and answer our own questions about media use.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

**Objective 1.1:** Students will identify, define, or analyze the content and core concepts and theories within the sub-fields.

**Objective 2.1** Students will articulate verbally or in writing an argument which defines, analyzes or

synthesizes relevant theories and concepts.

**Objective 2.2** Students will apply relevant theoretical concepts to assess real world issues.

**Objective 3.1** Students will apply a variety of tools methods, and perspectives to investigate and interpret issues relevant to the discipline

**Required Materials:** (These books are available at the SJU bookstore, or you can buy them online)

* Shanto Iyengar Media Politics: A Citizen’s Guide, (<https://www.amazon.com/Media-Politics-Citizens-Guide-Fourth-dp-0393664872/dp/0393664872/ref=mt_paperback?_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=> )
* Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnson, 2013, Changing Minds or Changing Channels (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/022604730X/ref=rdr_ext_tmb>)
* Various readings (posted on Canvas and/or handed out in class- Files are saved as Author Last Name Year)

**Graded Components:**

All of the below will be graded on a 100-point scale and then weighted according to the following percentages to determine the final course grade. Due dates are listed under the Schedule of Readings and Assignments section at the end of this syllabus:

**Major Assignments:**

**Reading Journal:** Each chapter or article should have a bulleted one-page summary following the instructions from class**. 30%, in 3 10% blocks.**

**Midterm:** Your midterm assignment will be to write several survey questions and to program them using a logic in Qualtrics. **15%**

**Final Project:** Construct a figure and present your “top-line” findings and what they mean for communication. Write up your findings. **15% findings, 10% presentation**

**Final:** Using real data, you will need to interpret a plot and apply theories learned in class. **20%**

**Participation (forms distributed in class):** Once toward the middle of the semester, and once at the end you will be given the chance to reflect on your own participation. Could you have done better, what did you do well?I reserve the right to change any participation grade. **10%**

**Office Hours and Email Policy:** My office is located in Barbelin 212, and I will be there on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2pm-3:15pm **or by appointment**. I’m also on campus *most* Wednesdays, but please email me if you’d like to see me. If you cannot attend, then the best way to reach me is by email ([lbucci@sju.edu](mailto:lbucci@sju.edu)). While I check my email regularly, it tends to pile up quickly, so I may need **48 hours** to get back to you. **If you have a question about upcoming assignments, they need to arrive in my inbox at least 24 hours prior to the due date**. Make sure your emails contain a brief question that cannot be answered via the syllabus. If you have a longer question (i.e. how am I doing in class, how do I become a major, how should I study), come to office hours. Those sorts of questions are not well answered in email form.

**Attendance, Participation, and Class Preparation:**

As adults, there is no need to reveal personal details or provide absence notes. If there is an ongoing concern, please see me in office hours or the associate dean, Dr. Matthew Anderson. He can vouch for extensive absences (without revealing personal details). **Class participation is affected by absences. If you are absent from class more than six times, you will receive an FA (failure due to absences) grade, unless verified in writing by the Associate Dean.**

When you skip class, you deprive your classmates of **your** insights! If you have an unexcused absence, you are not entitled to special instructions or accommodations.

The best advice I can give anyone in how to succeed in this course is to come to class every day, stay for the duration, and be ready and willing to ask questions about the assigned readings or to engage in the day's scheduled activity. How does the current material fit with what has been presented previously? Do you have questions about how theories might be applied to real life? Participating in class is easy; participating well is difficult. In most cases, the quality of your comments will matter more than the quantity of your participation. **There may be pop quizzes to assess participation.**

**“Attendance” means that you are in class, on time, and stay for the duration.** Please be on

time for class, and if a pattern presents itself it will result in a lower participation grade.

**Please turn cell phones OFF and only use computers for note-taking during class, and please DO NOT text during class – this is disrespectful to both the instructor and your classmates.**

**If a student neither participates nor prepares faithfully, then they should not be surprised to receive a D *or lower* as a participation grade (10% of the course grade).** In short, students **must** be active members in class to do well in this course, as indicated in the following guidelines. If you have missed more than four classes, you will receive an **FA** for the course.

**Assignments:**

Directions will be distributed separately for each of the assignments and also posted to Canvas. Electronic copies should be submitted before the *beginning of class* of the assigned day. In general, and unless otherwise noted, all assignments should be typed, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins. **NOTE: No late work is accepted in this class. Students MAY turn assignments inearly.**

While most assignments will be submitted on Canvas, any assignment that is a hard copy must be stapled. No, a folded corner is not the same thing as a staple.

**Make-up exams are not offered in this class**, unless a student experienced an extraordinary emergency, **verified in writing by the Associate Dean**.

**Computer/Hard Drive Failure Policy**

Given the proliferation of free “cloud" based storage and backup, there is no reason that a

hard drive failure should render all of your work lost. (*SERIOUSLY, even if not for this class, save yourself the potential headache!*) One program, Dropbox, is free and allows you to automatically backup your work to the cloud. I expect you to use a program like this and “computer errors” will not excuse missed/late assignments.

**About grades:**

If you disagree with your grades on an assignment or would like to discuss it further, I would be happy to discuss it with you. I am happy to meet with you at least 48 hours after the assignment is returned, outside of normal class time, provided you explain why you believe your grade is in error.

**Technology Policy:**

[Studies show](http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away) that you will retain more information if you take notes by hand rather than using a laptop or tablet. You are likely to do better in the course taking notes by hand.

**You are expected to bring a printed copy of all assigned material to class with you.**

**Academic Honesty:**

Read the [Academic Honestly Policy](http://hawkcentral.sju.edu/link/portal/16125/16171/Article/95/Academic-Honesty-Policy) and see me in office hours if you have questions. Plagiarism includes copying materials from the internet. If you block copy text from any source into a document, you must use quotation marks and cite the source. If you violate the Academic Honest Policy, you will the assignment and the course. At the end of each assignment or test, write **“I have read the SJU Academic Honesty Policy and abided by its requirements” then sign your name. If the assignment is submitted online, type the statement at the very end of the paper and type your name. Assignments will not be graded without this signed statement.**

**ALSO NOTE:** The University’s Academic Honesty Policy states that “the unauthorized recording, sale, or use of lectures and other instructional materials” is a violation of the Policy and is considered an act of dishonesty. **Let me be very clear: no one EVER has my permission to RECORD or DISTRIBUTE my words, emails, lectures, comments, or any of our class discussions in ANY format.**

**An Open Classroom:** It is important to me that you leave this class better able to engage critically with political topics. However, there will be times in class, as there will be times in life, when not everyone agrees. You are not required to adopt any particular viewpoint (as someone who studies political behavior, I don’t think I could change your mind even if I wanted to). You can engage with your peers in a constructive manner, and derogatory comments will not be accepted. Interrupting speakers, attacking speakers personally, speaking aggressively, disregarding statements made by the instructor are all types of conduct that are unacceptable.

**Resources on Campus:**

**The Writing Center:** The Saint Joseph’s University Writing Center is free to all members of the SJU community. Both appointments and drop-in sessions are available. The main Writing Center is located in 162 Merion Hall. The Center also has a satellite location in the Post Learning Commons (room 128). For more information, including hours of operation and instructions on how to make an appointment, please visit the SJU Writing Center website at [sju.edu/writingcenter](http://sju.edu/writingcenter).

**Students with Disabilities:**

Reasonable academic accommodations may be provided to students who submit appropriate documentation of their disability. Students are encouraged to contact Dr. Christine Mecke in the Office of Student Disability Services, Bellarmine, B-10, at cmecke@sju.edu; or at 610-660-1774 for assistance with this issue. The university also provides an appeal/grievance procedure regarding requested or offered reasonable accommodations through Dr. Mecke's office. More information can be found at: [www.sju.edu/sds](http://www.sju.edu/sds).

**Difficulty with Textbook Prices:**

Email me.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

ALL MATERIALS SHOULD BE READ *BEFORE* THE CLASS DATE INDICATED

**Notes about the schedule:**

1. The content and schedule may change from this outline to meet the needs of this group
2. All points of view–argued carefully and persuasively–are encouraged in all assignments and discussions.
3. **Throughout the semester, Tuesdays will be “state of the field” days, and Thursdays will be “practical” days. Every Tuesday you should bring a copy of the readings with you to class, and every Thursday you should bring your computer, unless otherwise stated.**

Week 1: Getting Started

Tuesday 8/27: Syllabus Review. What does it mean to study the media? How do we consume news?

**Thursday 8/29 No Class Dr. Bucci will be at a Conference**

* **Download Qualtrics, Email with Questions**

Week 2: Story Construction

Tuesday 9/3

* Murray Edelman, Constructing the Political Spectacle (Chicago:1988) Chapter 5
* Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnson, Ch. 1 “The Expansion of Choice” 1-16

Thursday 9/5:

* Introduction to Qualtrics; How do we Ask Questions? In a survey?

Come to class prepared with a 1-page statement: **If you could ask any question about media to a large number of average people, what would you ask? Why?** (Examples could be: Do people with political science majors watch more politics? Do Fox News viewers hold different opinions than “average” Republicans? Do only Republicans watch Fox News? Do people get most of their news for themselves or through friends? Who gets their news through friends? The list goes on...)

Week 3: Profit Incentives

Tuesday 9/10

* Democracy’s Detectives, James Hamilton 2018, Ch. 1 & 5
* Iyengar p. 31-39, Public Versus Commercial Ownership of Broadcast Media

Thursday 9/12

* How do we ask questions? And get answers.

Week 4: How does the Media Influence Us? Agenda Control

Tuesday 9/17: Iyengar Agenda Setting 241-260

Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnson, Ch. 2 “Changes in Media Technology and Content” 16-39

**Thursday 9/19 – No Class**

Week 5: Priming

Tuesday 9/24- First Journal Due Today

* Iyengar 254-273

Thursday 9/26

What does Real Data Look like?

* Downloading, Cleaning, Understanding Data (a beginning)

Week 6: Framing

Tuesday 10/1

* Iyengar 267-273 Framing
* Thomas E. Nelson, Rose Clawson, and Zoe Oxley (1997) “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance,” *APSR* 91(3):567-83.

Thursday 10/3

Programming in Qualtrics

Week 7: Persuasion

Tuesday 10/8:

Iyengar Persuasion, 273-279

Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnson, Ch. 3 “Selective Exposure and Media Effects” 39-70

Thursday 10/10: Work on Midterm, Midterm due 10/15

Week 8:

Tuesday: 10/15 **No Class, Fall Break**

* **Midterm Assignment Due on Canvas at Course Time**

Thursday: 10/17: **Literature Day Today**

* Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnston, Ch. 4 “Partisan News and Mass Polarization” 106-125
* Iyengar 209-230

**Midterm grades due:10/18**

**Week 9: Selective Exposure: Changing Minds or Digging in Your Heels**

Tuesday 10/22

* Feldman, Lauren, Edward W. Maibach, and Connie Roser-Renouf. (2011) “Climate on cable: The nature and impact of global warming coverage on Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC.” International Journal of Press Politics.

Thursday 10/24

* What does selective exposure mean for media consumption?
* What does selective exposure mean for our interactions with people?

**Week 10: Selective Exposure Continued**

Tuesday 10/29 Last Day to Withdraw \*Second Journal Due\*

* Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnston, Ch. 6 “The Salience and Framing of Issues” 106-125

Thursday 10/31 \*The Spookiest Class\*

How do we answer questions?

**Week 11: Hearing the Other Side**

Tuesday 11/5

* Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnston, Ch. 7 “Hearing the Other Side and Standing Firm” 91-106
* Muddiman, Ashley, and Natalie Jomini Stroud. "News values, cognitive biases, and partisan incivility in comment sections." *Journal of communication* 67, no. 4 (2017): 586-609.

Thurday 11/7

Problems with your data

**Week 12: Hating Media and Hating Everyone**

Tuesday 11/12

* <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/08/08/americas-social-media-addiction-is-getting-worse>
* Amira, Karyn. Jenn Wright and Daniela Goya-Tocchetto. 2019. "[In-Group Love vs. Out-Group Hate: Which Is More Important to Partisans and When?](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11109-019-09557-6?wt_mc=Internal.Event.1.SEM.ArticleAuthorOnlineFirst&utm_source=ArticleAuthorOnlineFirst&utm_medium=email&utm_content=AA_en_06082018&ArticleAuthorOnlineFirst_20190623)" *Political Behavior*

Thursday 11/14

Making plots

**Week 13: When Media Choice is Media No Choice**

Tuesday 11/19 Sinclair Purchases of Local Stations

* Martin, Gregory J., and Joshua McCrain. 2019 "Local news and national politics." *American Political Science Review* 113(2): 372-384.
* Iyengar 122-138

Thursday 11/21

Presenting top line findings

**Week 14: Elites Using the Media**

Tuesday 11/26:\* Final Journal Due\*

* Evans, Heather K., Victoria Cordova, and Savannah Sipole. "Twitter style: An analysis of how house candidates used Twitter in their 2012 campaigns." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47, no. 2 (2014): 454-462.
* Kevin Arceneaux and Martin Johnston, Ch. 7 “Bias and Incivility in Partisan Media” 125-147
* Nyhan, Brendan. 2017. “Trump Shows How to Smother a Scandal: With a Bigger Story.” New York Times, January 12.

Thursday: No Class, Thanksgiving

Week 15

Tuesday 12/3 In Class Presentations

Thursday 12/5 In Class Presentations

Exam Week:

Do not leave campus prior to your scheduled exam period.