CM/PO 330 MEDIA, POLITICS AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE US AND FRANCE
IES Abroad Paris BIA

DESCRIPTION: The media from radio to print and television, as well as new digital media, are sometimes called the fourth branch of government in the United States. Whether in France or in the US, 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 looking at both political communications and news, the two-way channel between the mass media and political actors, and the relationship between the news media and politics as major issues in modern society. 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, legitimizing local, national, and international issues. Essentially, this media and communications focused course emphasizes the ways in which news media shape everything we know about politics. Like all journalism disciplines today, political journalism is rapidly changing with the Internet. A portion of the course will be dedicated to new media and how online reporting and social networking has altered modern society and politics.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:
This class will be an interactive seminar based:
- Class lectures by the professor
- Class discussions and analyses of ongoing events in the media using audiovisual materials (French and American tv news, blogs, newspapers, polls)
- Presentations by students of their ongoing works (short assignments, group presentations)

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:
- Course participation - 10%
- Midterm Written Exam - 30%
- Short Papers - 30%
- Group Presentation & Final Paper - 30%

Course Participation (10%)
Lectures and assigned readings are designed to complement each other, and I recommend doing the readings for each class in advance since this will allow you to get more out of lecture. You should read each item on the list closely and come to class each week prepared to discuss them in detail. These questions may help you prepare for the discussion:
- What outcome(s) is the author seeking to explain?
- What is this author(s) main argument?
- Where does this reading fit into the literature and how does it seek to contribute?
- What is the nature of this reading's empirical research design and findings?
- What are paper's strengths and weaknesses?

We will also discuss and analyze case studies in class for which your participation is important. Participation includes asking questions and participating in class regularly, if you do not you will not receive above a B in participation and you should be aware in advance. This class is based on discussion of materials and topics and cannot function properly without you and your ideas. Realize that all questions are good to be asked even if you are worried its stupid. All ideas are equally respected in class so long as your arguments are backed up by fact and well laid out. Respecting others arguments and ideas is essential to making everyone feel
comfortable. You will be subject to written quiz at the end of the semester. If you do not understand the readings, please speak up in class or by email and ask the professor to elaborate.

Midterm Exam (30 %)
Your exam will be based both on class lectures and discussions as well as your readings. It will be in short answer format. A midterm exam review will be held the week prior to the midterm (week 5) in order to allow for questions concerning format and/or content.

Group Presentation and final paper (30%)
In groups of three or four, students will choose a contemporary topic in politics, thinking about the ways in which this issue has been covered and will be covered by the media. Groups will conduct research on the issue and based on their research, groups will develop 15-minute presentations that discuss their chosen topic and findings to the class. They will turn in a written version a 10-12 pages paper (double-spaced) that illustrates how this issue has been portrayed by the media, how accurately the issue has been presented, and perceptions of this issue by the public.

Grading:
Papers will be graded according to the following criteria (in order of importance):
(1) Clarity of subject, thesis statement and success of its defense, in terms of both evidence and logic (ie organization of your thoughts)
(2) Thoroughness and accuracy of annotation
(3) Appropriateness of bibliography
(5) Spelling and overall presentation
Since you will be noted on your organization, the presentation of your argument, it is necessary 1) to pay attention to your introduction and your general organization 2) Verify your spelling and syntax.

Short papers (30%)
You will complete 3 of the following 5 assignments. Each should be 2-3 pages long (double spaced)

1. Investigate the nature of the French media system. Who owns the country’s newspapers and radio stations? How many are there? What types of stories do these outlets carry? How much control does the government have over the content of the news media? In general, does the media system of the country seem to serve its citizens well? DUE Week 2

2. Visit the websites of two media watchdog organizations, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (www.fair.org) and the Media Research Center (www.mediaresearch.org). Discuss two or three news reports that the organizations criticize. Is the criticism fair? Why or why not? Do you have any criticisms of the watchdog groups .Due Week 4.

3. Find two recent political advertisements on-line (one French, one US). They can be video or paper ads. Describe the ad, including the candidates mentioned. How would you assess its accuracy and fairness? Do you think it is effective? Why? What differences can be seen in the two (tone, content, etc)? Do we see distinct national models of political advertising or can we detect a “cookie cutter” model in both cases? Due week 6

4. Access the White House website or the website for the Palais de l’Elysée and review the proceedings from a recent press conference. What types of issues are raised by reporters? What types of information did the administration provide? What is your assessment of the quality of the questions reporters are asking and the quality of information that is being given to them? Due Week 9

5. Look at recent opinion polls (IPSOS, EUROBAROMETER ETc) on trust and confidence in specific political figures and parties asking citizens for example what they like or dislike about President Hollande and President Obama or other contemporary political figures from France and the US (Le Pen, Valls, Sarkozy...). Are the issues discussed newsworthy issues? How did the polls indicated the way in which they were undertaken (sample size questions)? What is your analysis of the role of polls and their accuracy? Due Week 11.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:
By the end of the course students will be able to:
- a better understanding of the importance of political communications and the news media today
- Learn tools for analyzing and assessing both current trends and historical evolutions
- Improve your skills in critical thinking and writing which is an essential tool
- Identify major issues in political communications and media in both France and the US and analyze them according to given frameworks and be able to formulate a clear and well argued analysis and opinion on these topics.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**
This class STRICITLY follows the center’s attendance requirements. Given the participatory nature of the class, any non-justified absence is unacceptable and will be problematic for your final grade.

**CONTENT:**

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2 Jan. 30</td>
<td>Analyzing the Modern Media: How Does the Media Make the News?</td>
<td>1st short assignment due Required Reading: WOLSFELD, Section II (45-72), KUHN pp29-34 (formative influences), Business Premier “CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera...and France24?”</td>
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<td>Week 3 Feb. 6</td>
<td>What’s Wrong with Modern News Media? Problems &amp; Possible Solutions</td>
<td>Article on Media Bias (moodle) 2nd short assignment due</td>
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<td>Week 4 Feb. 20</td>
<td>Trends in Political News Coverage of War (excerpt of PBS film in class)</td>
<td>WOLSFELD SECTION I (p7-23), MCNAIR, Ch. 9.</td>
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<td>Week 6 MIDTERM Mar. 6</td>
<td>News Coverage of Elections (2)</td>
<td>Required readings: MCNAIR CHs 6 and 7, “Political Campaigns and Big Data” (Rogers on moodle), Kuhn pp72-79 (Political Pluralism)</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Media and Agenda Setting (2)</td>
<td>Required reading: MCNAIR, Chapter 5</td>
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<td><strong>Week 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mar. 27</strong></td>
<td><em>The New Wave: The Impact of Cable TV and the Internet on Political Communications (the CNN effect)</em> Post Industrial Journalism (Shirky) <a href="http://towcenter.org/research/post-industrial-journalism-adapting-to-the-present-2/">http://towcenter.org/research/post-industrial-journalism-adapting-to-the-present-2/</a></td>
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<td><strong>Week 10</strong></td>
<td><strong>Apr. 3</strong></td>
<td>How Social Media has changed Political communications after 2012 Reading: “The political power of social Media” (Shirky) <a href="https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2010-12-20/political-power-social-media">https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2010-12-20/political-power-social-media</a> “The internet and American Political Campaigns,” (Karpf) <a href="http://www.cfinst.org/pdf/papers/08_Karpf_Technology.pdf">http://www.cfinst.org/pdf/papers/08_Karpf_Technology.pdf</a></td>
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<td><strong>Week 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>Apr. 10</strong></td>
<td><em>News and Democracy: What Should Be the Role of the Media in a Democracy?</em> : The construction and use of polls in the media Required Reading : WOLSFELD Section 3 (p95-117) + most recent polls (check on line at CNN, Politico or any major news source for US elections, as well as GALLUP or PEW, for French sources in English France24 and IPSOS or LEMONde in French)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 12</strong></td>
<td><strong>Apr. 21</strong></td>
<td>Presentation of group projects and conclusion FINAL PAPERS DUE</td>
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REQUIRED READINGS:

- MCNAIR, B. An introduction to political communication, Routledge, 2011. (on moodle or online)
- KUHN, R. The Media In Contemporary France, Open University Press, 2011. (ON RESERVE AT IES)

Students are REQUIRED to read a French and a US daily newspaper and watch the news before coming to class and be able to discuss in an analytical fashion the media from that week.

RECOMMENDED READINGS: