Political Communication

Lecture: Tues and Thurs 12:30 – 1:45, Public Affairs Building 1234
Section: Tuesday 2 – 2:50, Physics and Astronomy Building 1425

This course considers the determinants of media content and the degree to which Americans’ political opinions and actions are influenced by that content. Specific topics include:

- the history of the news media
- recent media trends
- theories of attitude formation and change
- media bias
- the role of sources in the construction of the news
- the economics of news production and consumption
- the ways in which media shape public perceptions of the political world
- campaign communication, and
- the general role of the mass media in the democratic process.

Assigned Work and Grading

Your grade is based on three exams (48% total), in-class reading quizzes (5%), participation (12%) and a group commercial project (35%).

Tests
Each exam is worth 16% and will be composed of a mixture of take-home essays and in-class closed-book short-answer questions. The final exam will occur during finals week and will be identical in format to the prior two tests. The tests are for the most part not cumulative.

Reading Quizzes
On most days I will have a one-question reading quiz to test whether students have completed and understood the readings assigned for that day. (On days that there are audio or video segments assigned, these may also be tested.) These quizzes count toward your grade in two ways. First, you receive participation credit regardless of how you answer the question. Second, you receive performance credit based on whether or not you get the answer correct. The final grade you receive for both participation and performance will be out of N-3 classes, where N is the number of classes in which we have a quiz. This means that if we have a quiz in 17 classes, that your final grade will be out of 14 points. In other words, you can skip three days or leave your clicker at home three days and still maximize your participation score. (I cap this score at
14 points – i.e. there is no extra credit.) I do this to allow students to miss class for whatever reason, but also because the clicker hardware and software can sometimes cause problems. You are responsible for making sure your clicker works. Please bring your clicker with you on the second day of class (Thurs. 1/7), when we will make sure that everyone’s software is working correctly. Please also check frequently to make sure your quiz grades are uploaded correctly to CCLE. I will upload the quiz grades for each week after Thursday’s class at the latest.

**Participation**

Active participation in the class is essential. Some of the material for this class will only be covered in lecture. Beyond in-class clicker surveys, you will also fill out peer-evaluations of the commercial projects (see below), which will count for three participation points. You are also asked to participate in several other ways, including suggesting exam questions and completing an audience survey questionnaire for the commercial projects.

**Group Commercial Project**

Each student will participate in a group of three to create a political advertisement for a fictitious presidential candidate. This project will give students insight into the respective roles of sources and the news media in producing political communication. It will also familiarize students with practical methods of video production. The instructions for this project will be distributed separately. Storyboards will count as 5 points of your final grade, while the final video project will be 30 points. You must also demonstrate proficiency in movie editing software.

**All grading related issues will be handled by Billy.**

**Readings**

Readings for this class include:

- Online readings available through links found in this syllabus or on the course website. Note that you will need to use a VPN connection (see http://www.bol.ucla.edu/services/vpn/ ) or proxy server (http://bol.ucla.edu/services/proxy/ ) to view much of this content from computers outside the campus network. If a reading has gone offline, please let me know and I will provide an alternative link. Many are also available in the Fall 2015 course reader (which I have eliminated for this quarter’s class).

Because this is the first quarter in which I am moving all readings to the online system, they are not all available yet on CCLE as of January 5th. I am told by the library that they will all likely be available by the end of the second week. All CCLE readings due before then are available now under the “Readings” tab.

**Clickers**
Students must purchase, rent, or borrow an iClicker remote for use in class quizzes (available at the bookstore). Any of the iClicker models should work fine, except for the web iClicker phone app, which requires wifi (which is unreliable) or iClickerGo, which is not compatible. You might also be able to reserve a free iClicker rental through UCLA’s lendme.oid.ucla.edu site.

I have had students with faulty clickers that they either purchased, rented, or borrowed. This is why it is imperative that you be sure your clicker is working correctly as soon as possible. We will have a practice clicker session on the second day of class where student can make sure their clickers are functioning properly.

**Academic Integrity**

I take academic integrity very seriously. You may not copy other people’s quiz answers/clicks, click for anyone else, bring a cheat sheet to class on the days of tests, plagiarize, copy answers from an online source, or obtain the answer key for any textbook. These are only several examples of academic integrity violations. If any of these or other violations occur, you will most likely fail the class and may face other repercussions from UCLA. The department and school does not take these violations lightly. People have been expelled from UCLA for cheating in CS160. Please read information on UCLA’s academic integrity policy here: [http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/StudentGuide.pdf](http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/StudentGuide.pdf). I reserve the right to upload your work to turnitin (plagiarism detection software).

**Other**

If you miss class, you are responsible for securing notes from another student. Students who are very sick and contagious should not come to class or office hours! Absences on the day of a test will only be excused in cases of an unforeseen emergency or illness. These will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Please do not use computers, electronic tablets, or phones in class. Lecture slides will be made available after class each week.

All students with disabilities that may require special accommodations should contact the UCLA Office for Students with Disabilities (A255 Murphy Hall; 310-825-1501; 310-206-6083 [telephone device for the deaf]) as soon as possible.
Schedule

Readings: none

Readings:

Other: Test clickers; practice quiz. (Real quizzes will take place in almost every class after this.)

Readings:

Section: Form groups of three for your commercial projects. These must be finalized by 1/21 at the latest.

Readings:

Readings:
• Listen to This American Life “Red State/Blue State” Prologue and Act ONE. http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/478/red-state-blue-state?act=1

Readings:

Due: 1. Send Billy the names of everyone in your group by email by 7pm. (Only one email is necessary per group, but be sure to cc everyone in the group.) 2. Post 1-2 suggested exam questions 7pm.

Other: Discuss storyboards project.


Guest Speaker: Mich Matthews, former Senior Vice President for Microsoft’s Central Marketing Group.

Other: Possibly a short lecture in addition to our guest speaker.

Tues. Feb. 2. Economics of News. Competition and Ownership of the News

Readings:

Due: Complete the iMovie tutorial on Lynda.com by noon on 2/2. Upload your certificate onto CCLE.

Section: 1. Go over Exam #1.

Thurs. Feb 4. Legal Setting.

Readings:


Readings:

**Section:** iMovie tutorial and go over storyboards.

**Thurs. Feb. 11. Objectivity and Bias.**

**Readings:**
- Listen to this Freakonomics podcast, “How Biased is Your Media?” http://freakonomics.com/2012/02/16/how-biased-is-your-media (36min)

**Due:** Storyboards. Hand these in as paper copies at the start of class. Billy will collect them and they will be considered late if they arrive after 12:32. You can draw them out – they do not need to be digital since they are simply drafts. Alternatively, if you already have a draft of your video, you can upload that instead. If you anticipate being late or absent, please scan and upload the full storyboard to us before 12:30pm. Only one assignment should be turned in for each group.

**Tues. Feb. 16. Issue Advocacy Organizations. Beats and Routines (1).**

**Guest Speaker:** Felix Schein, President of RALLY.

**Readings:**
- Review CA Proposition 8, and Supreme Court decisions that struck down this law. You can review this using any source you like (here is one article discussing the SC cases: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/27/us/politics/supreme-court-gay-marriage.html?pagewanted=all).

**Due:** Audience Survey Questions and suggested exam questions (separate assignments) due by 7pm.

**Thurs. Feb. 18. Exam #2.**

**Due:** Complete audience survey by 7pm on Friday 2/19. (Results will be distributed on or before Tues. 2/23.)
Guest speaker: Andrew Rothman, Blue State Digital.

Readings:
- Read about 2016 campaign coverage.

Section: Go over exam #2.

Thurs. Feb. 25. Beats and Routines (2). Sources: President, Opposition, Research, Congress, Supreme Court, Interest Groups.

Readings:


Readings:


Due. Final commercials due at noon.

Readings:

Due: Fill in commercial evaluations by Sunday, March 6th at 7pm. These are worth 3 participation points!

Readings:

Readings:

**Due:** Suggested exam questions due by 7pm.

**Tues. Mar. 15. 12-2. Final Exam.** (Note: the exam is only for the middle two hours of the three hour time block which runs from 11:30-2:30.)