

# POLS172 Introduction to Political Communication

Instructor of Records: Julien Labarre

UC Santa Barbara, Summer Session A 2023

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Office: Social Sciences & Media Studies 1310B

Office Hours: Friday 11:30AM-1:30PM & by appointment

Class Time and Location: MTWR 3:30-4:35PM – Interactive Learning Pavilion 3101

## Course Description

This course offers a comprehensive exploration of political communication in the digital age, focusing on the complex interplay between media, public opinion, and democratic processes. Students will examine the historical evolution of political communication in the United States and its impact on public opinion formation. The course delves into the effects of media on individuals' attitudes and beliefs, as well as cognitive and psychological mechanisms behind political preferences. Students will also learn about campaign communication, including the influence of media on campaign strategies and the significance of social media in contemporary presidential campaigns. The digital age poses new challenges to the public sphere. These phenomena include selective exposure, polarization, the proliferation of conspiracy theories and disinformation, declining trust, and online violence. By the end of the course, students will have gained a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of political communication and its implications for democratic societies.

## Course Requirements

The requirements in this course are:

- 1 blue-book midterm (45%)
- 1 cumulative bluebook final exam (45%)
- Attendance (10%)

*Examinations will cover both the readings and lecture material.*

## **A Note on Grading**

Unless there was a simple, factual grading error, e.g., scores not tallied correctly, I will not regrade student assignments. This applies to all assignments. I do not hand out extra-credit opportunities. There will be no post-hoc adjustments made to your grade, so *please do not ask*.

## **Lecture Attendance Policy**

Attending lecture is mandatory. Not showing up will impact your grade. Slides will be uploaded online. However, lecture will not be recorded. If you miss lecture, you will have to fetch notes from another student.

## **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's ideas, words, or work without proper attribution. It is a serious academic offense under the university's student code of conduct and will not be tolerated. If you do not understand what constitutes plagiarism, please talk to me ASAP.

## **Course Policy on Generative AIs**

Generative AI can be a valuable tool for research and learning, and you may use them to stimulate ideas, automate laborious tasks, or do some light proofreading, though be aware that tools like ChatGPT may change your text so much that it no longer reflects your original thought. These tools are not a substitute for critical thinking and writing. They predict text based on statistical data and can be incorrect. If they provide incorrect information and you use it, you are responsible for the consequences. Be aware that AI-generated text may have intellectual property and plagiarism implications since it is derived from other sources. If AI tools impact your performance negatively, consider changing your usage.

## **Course Policy on CourseHero and similar platforms**

Some students upload course/section materials on CourseHero without receiving written permission from their instructors and TAs. Monetizing your instructor's work without their consent is unethical and will get you in trouble with the Office of Student Conduct (see [Academic Dishonesty](#) > [Misuse of Course Materials](#)). Student papers and exams are considered course material as well and should not be distributed on platforms like CourseHero without written permission. This policy continues to apply after graduation and infringements may lead to retroactive sanctions from the University for academic dishonesty. The material that I produce for this course and the feedback I give you on assignments are not meant to be publicly distributed.

## Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

While it is sometimes appropriate to skim pieces, I expect all to come to class having a detailed understanding of each scholar's contribution. You are expected to complete all the assigned readings by Thursday of each week. Readings from week 3 will not be tested on the midterm examination. The readings marked as "recommended" are supplemental readings that you may find useful depending on your personal interests. A small number of distributed items are made available by me on the course web page.


### WEEK 1


**June 26.** Class Introduction, Public Opinion & Deliberative Democracy


**June 27.** The History of Political Communication in the US


**June 28.** Media Effects (Part 1)

**June 29.** Media Effects (Part 2)

 Castells, Manuel. 2007. "Communication, power and counter-power in the network society." *International Journal of Communication* 1: 238-266. **22 pages.**

 Bimber, Bruce. 2003. *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **75 pages.**

 McCombs, Maxwell and Donald L. Shaw. 1972. "The agenda-setting function of mass media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36: 176-187. **11 pages.**

 Vallone, Robert, Lee Ross, and Mark Lepper. 1985. "The hostile media phenomenon: Biased perception and perceptions of media bias in coverage of the Beirut massacre." *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 49(3): 577-585. **8 pages.**


### WEEK 2

**July 3.** Public Opinion & Cognition – Sources of Attitudes


**July 4.** No class, Independence Day

**July 5.** Public Opinion & Cognition – Motivated Reasoning & Selective Exposure

**July 6.** Public Opinion & Cognition – Political Personality

 Blais, Julie, Philip G. Chen, and Scott Pruyers. 2021. "Political Psychology: The Role of Personality in Politics." *Frontiers in Political Science* 3: 1-4. **2 pages.**

 Cahir, Semih. 2017. "Zaller's Theory of Opinion Formation." **4 pages.**

 Carney, Dana R., John T. Jost, Samuel D. Gosling, and Jeff Potter. 2008. "The Secret Lives of Liberals and Conservatives: Personality Profiles, Interaction Styles, and the Things They Leave Behind." *Political Psychology* 29(6): 807-840. **29 pages.**

📺 Gilliam, Franklin, and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. "Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3): 560-573. **12 pages.**

📺 Nelson, Thomas, Rosalee Crawson, and Zoe Oxley. 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and its Effect on Tolerance." *American Political Science Review* 91(5): 567-583. **14 pages.**

📺 Neundorff, Anja, and Kaat Smets. 2017. "Political Socialization and the Making of Citizens." *Oxford Handbooks Online*. **16 pages.**

📖 Stroud, Nathalie J. 2017. "Selective Exposure Theories." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. **12 pages.**

**RECOMMENDED:** Caprara, Gian Vittorio, and Michele Vecchione. 2013. "Personality Approaches to Political Behavior." in Huddy L., D. O. Sears and J. S. Levy (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (2 ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. **26 pages.**

### WEEK 3

#### July 10. Midterm Examination

July 11. Campaign Communication (Part 1) – Campaign Strategy and Rhetoric

July 12. Campaign Communication (Part 2) – Presidential Debates

July 13. Social Media, Presidential Campaigns and Connective Action

📺 Bimber, Bruce. 2014. "Digital Media in the Obama Campaigns of 2008 and 2012: Adaptation to the Personalized Political Communication Environment." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 11(2): 130–50. **17 pages.**

📺 Boyer, Pierre C, Thomas Delemotte, and Germain Gauthier. "Mobilization without Consolidation: Social Media and the Yellow Vests Protests." **15 pages.**

**RECOMMENDED:** Trent, Judith S., Robert V. Friedenberg, and Robert E. Denton, Jr. 2016. *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices* (8th ed). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. **Selections - pages 59-85.**

### WEEK 4

July 17. The Crisis of Public Spheres (Part 1) – Selective Exposure & Polarization

July 18. The Crisis of Public Spheres (Part 2) – Conspiracy Theories & Distrust

July 19. The Crisis of Public Spheres (Part 3) – Online Violence, Victims

July 20. The Crisis of Public Spheres (Part 4) – Online Violence, Perpetrators

▶ Anita Sarkeesian at TEDxWomen 2012. **10min YouTube video.**

📖 Benkler, Yochai, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts. 2018. *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation and Radicalization in American Politics*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. **Read chapter 1. 40 pages.**

📖 Blumler, Jay G. 2018. "The Crisis of Public Communication, 1995-2017." *Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture* 25(1-2): 83-92. **7 pages.**

📖 Blair, Kristen. 2019. "Linking bullying to loneliness and belonging." *Carolina Journal*. **1 ½ page.**

📖 Iyengar, Shanto, and Kyu S. Hahn. 2009. "Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use." *Journal of Communication* 59: 19-39. **15 pages.**

📖 O'Mahen, Patrick. 2015. "A Big Bird Effect? The Interaction Among Public Broadcasting, Public Subsidies, and Political Knowledge." *European Political Science Review* 8(2): 311-332. **19 pages.**

📖 Sutton, Robbie M, and Karen M Douglas. 2020. "Conspiracy Theories and the Conspiracy Mindset: Implications for Political Ideology." *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 34: 118-122. **4 pages.**

**RECOMMENDED:** Hawdon, James. 2012. "Applying differential association theory to online hate groups: a theoretical statement." *Research on Finnish Society* 5: 39-47. **6 ½ pages.**

**RECOMMENDED:** 538 Politics Podcast: Can COVID-19 Conspiracy Theories Be Stopped? - *FiveThirtyEight Podcast*. **45min.**

**RECOMMENDED:** Aisch, Gregor, Jon Huang, and Cecilia Kang. 2016. "Dissecting the PizzaGate Conspiracy Theories." *The New York Times*. **Equivalent of 10 pages.**

## WEEK 5

**July 24.** Definitions of Populism

**July 25.** Explaining Support for Populism


**July 26.** Populism & Disinformation

**July 27.** Media Systems, News Quality & Partisan Propaganda

▶ Cas Mudde Explains Populism. **10min YouTube video.**

📖 Benkler, Yochai, Roberts Faris, and Hal Roberts. 2018. *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*. Oxford, UK:

Oxford University Press. **Read chapters 2 and 3. 52 pages.**

 Rosenberg, Shawn. 2021. "Democracy Devouring Itself: The Rise of the Incompetent Citizen and the Appeal of Right Wing Populism." In *Psychology of Political and Everyday Extremism*. UC Irvine. **30 pages.**


## **WEEK 6**


**July 31. Class Cancelled**

**August 1.** Disinformation in International Relations & Concluding Thoughts

**August 2.** Q&A Study Session – *bring your questions to class, no lecture*

**August 3. Final Examination** (cumulative)

 Jeangène Vilmer, Jean-Baptiste, Alexandre Escorcía, Marine Guillaume, and Janaina Herrera. 2018. "Who Manipulates Information and Why? (42-62)" in *Information Manipulation: A Challenge for Our Democracies*. Report by the Policy Planning Staff (CAPS) of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Institute for Strategic Research (IRSEM) of the Ministry for the Armed Forces: Paris. **Read pp. 42-62. 20 pages.**

 Paul, Christopher, and Miriam Matthews. 2016. "The Russian 'Firehose of Falsehood Propaganda' Model." *RAND Corporation*. **11 pages.**

## **Campus Resources and Student Distress**

You should feel comfortable to approach me regarding any difficulties encountered while taking this course. You should also inform me at your earliest convenience of any disability or condition that may hinder your capacity to succeed in this course. This will allow me to explore necessary and equitable adjustments to class requirements. Additionally, please make use of the following campus resources where appropriate:

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** (805-893-4411, <http://counseling.ucsb.edu/>) provides mental health counseling, self-assistance material, and referrals to off-campus mental health support.

**Disabled Students Program (DSP):** (805-893-2668, <http://sa.ucsb.edu/dsp>) provides educational support services to qualified students with either temporary or permanent disabilities. Accommodation requests can be submitted online through UCSB's special student support program at <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/>. To facilitate smooth planning, please initiate your accommodation requests as soon as the term commences.

**AS Food Bank and CalFresh:** for students grappling with food or housing insecurity that could potentially impact your academic performance, it is highly recommended

to connect with a Food Security and CalFresh Advocate, who is knowledgeable about the extensive resource pool available at UCSB. You can find their walk-in timings at <http://food.ucsb.edu/>. It is also recommended to inform the course instructor if you feel at ease to do so. Note that Associated Students have also launched a Food Bank for UCSB students, available at the UCEN.