Media and Public Policy
Course 90-778
Second Mini, Fall 2016

Instructor: Jonathan W. Delano, J.D.

Time: Thursdays, 6:00 p.m. to 8:50 p.m.

Location: 1208 Hamburg Hall

Prerequisites: None

Appointments: Call instructor at 412-445-0504 to schedule

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course will examine the influence of the media on public policy in the United States. During the mini, students will join the instructor in considering various explanations of how the news (and other activities of journalists) affects the policy-making process. This will involve exposure to the major themes of media influence in American politics. We will also consider the role of the media in elections, in public policy debates, and in public opinion formation.

Through lots of readings, discussion, and expert guest visitors, we want to understand how the media influences American politics and policy, as well as why the media behaves the way it does.

Working in teams, students will complete a project during the mini that involves drafting a “media strategy analysis” for some organization promoting a major policy issue of current importance.

Students will leave the course with a better understanding of the role of the media in American public life, with practical experience in the analysis of news, with knowledge of the laws that affect the media, and with some sense of how to interact with journalists and media when participating in policy-making.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class Participation:

All students are expected to participate vigorously in class. Student contributions will shape the direction of the discussion and the agendas of future class sessions. Class participation will be a significant component of the final grade. Participation will be judged based on attendance (always important in these short minis) and evidence of preparation for the class sessions, contributions to the class discussions, and interrogation of both the instructor and class visitors.

This instructor also believes that students should be encouraged to speak freely and openly in the classroom. No comment is too unimportant, and no question is too silly. And there are rarely right or wrong answers. If you are NOT an active participant in the classroom, you cannot earn the highest grade. There are always a few students who love to talk, and I welcome them to my classes. I'm a talker, too. But to guarantee that everyone who wants to contribute has an equal chance, I will always give other class members the opportunity to speak before returning to someone who has already spoken.

When it comes to ideas, there is no such thing as political correctness in a classroom. We can be respectful to each other’s right to an opinion without fear that any idea whatsoever is off limits for discussion. Free speech requires students to feel free to say whatever they want without worrying that their words will come back to haunt them on YouTube! Consequently, no student may record or tape any classroom activity without the express written consent of this instructor. If a student believes that he/she is disabled and needs to record or tape classroom activities, he/she should contact the Office of Disability Resources to request an appropriate accommodation.

Finally, during class, please turn those smart phones OFF -- please, no texting in class. Laptops in class, when not used for note-taking, can be annoying and distractive to other students sitting nearby. Bottom line, please stay focused on the class discussion and not be surfing the net or receiving emails, instant messages, DMs, and texts. Step outside the classroom if you really must engage in non-classroom relevant activity.

Course Project:

Each group of students will prepare a media strategy analysis for an organization involved in an important public policy issue. Students should identify that organization and policy issue, and then prepare recommendations for the organization on how to improve the use of the media as an instrument for policy change. This analysis will offer reasoned advice, based on the course material and class discussion, on how the organization can further its policy agenda through the media. The grade for the project will be based both on the quality of the written report (including the quality of the
writing) and the soundness of the analysis provided. Try to keep your paper close to a 15-page length, not counting appendices.

Mini Quiz:

To help separate the A and A+ students from the others, on the last day of class, students will take a short mini quiz. The quiz will encompass only those readings assigned by the instructor and the class discussions. A review of class notes and the materials assigned should suffice for preparation.

Grades:

Final course grades will be based on the following percentage distribution across the course requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course project</td>
<td>33.4 percent of grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>33.3 percent of grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini quiz</td>
<td>33.3 percent of grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Grades are not necessarily curved. The final grade, in general, will follow from the average earned across the requirements, but the instructor does reserve the right to assign grades when circumstances warrant that differ with the straight average.

Readings:


Handouts from Instructor
CLASS SCHEDULE

Thursday, October 27:  What is the Media?

General introductions of students and instructor.  
Analysis of what is the Media, how has it changed in the 21st Century, and what 
amare the major issues this poses for American democracy.

Thursday, November 3:  The History & Changing State of American Media

Readings for Nov. 3:  
  (handout)  
  Bennett, Chapters 1, 3 & 4

Discussion of the historical development of media in America and its interaction 
with government, politics, and policy-making.

Thursday, November 10:  What is the "Business" of News

Readings for Nov. 10:  
  Bennett, Chapter 7  
  McChesney, Prefaces (both), Chapter 1 & 2

Discussion of what constitutes the “media” in today’s world, the debate over how 
“controlled” it is, and its impact on policy-making.

Thursday, November 17:  What is Media Bias?  
[to be rescheduled]

Readings for Nov. 17:  
  Bennett, Chapter 2, 5 & 6

Discussion of the true nature of media bias.

No Class on Thursday, November 24 -- Thanksgiving
Thursday, December 1: How Do Interest Groups Influence the Media?

Readings for Dec. 1:
Bennett, Chapter 8
McChesney, Chapter 4 & Conclusion

Panel: Journalists & Public Relations Experts
Discussion of organizational interaction with the media.

Thursday, December 8: What the Rules & Where Are We Heading?
[Class Meets at KDKA-TV, One Gateway Center, Downtown]

Readings for Dec. 8:
Bennett, Chapters 7 & 8
McChesney, Afterward & Appendix

Introduction to some of the rules and regulations that govern media conduct. Discussion of the changing media in the 21st century.

Panel: KDKA-TV news managers & journalists

Thursday, December 15: Wrapping It All Up
Cookies & Mini Quiz

Friday, December 16, midnight: FINAL PAPERS DUE
All papers must be emailed to me at jdelano@andrew.cmu.edu by 12:00 midnight at the end of the day, Friday, December 16th!