“The medium is the message.” – Marshall McLuhan, 1964

“Politics is just like show business.” – Ronald Reagan, 1966

“There is no such thing as Objective Journalism, the phrase itself is a pompous contradiction in terms.”

-- Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail ’72*

These days it seems like you are nobody if you are not on television, have a heavily-trafficked web presence, and regularly appear in the media. Reality TV, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and smart phone apps have become a routine part of life for the vast majority of Americans. Image and *images* are everything. As a result we will take a critical look at mass media: what it is, how it operates, and what effect it has. But we will go further and particularly examine media as it relates to government and public life in general. No longer confined to elections and campaigns, media appeals have become standard fare in the day-to-day conduct of government. Such appeals are used by private interests as well as by official decision makers to further partisan and self-serving objectives. Politics is show business. Nearly every politician has a web presence and regularly appears on popular talk shows to “spin” issues in an attempt to appeal to the public. In short, the use and misuse of media by political elites for political purposes has transformed the practice of leadership and governance and raises questions about democratic process and policy outcomes. In this class we will broadly examine image-based, media-driven-politics in the United States both among
citizens and between political elites and the public. What are the implications for
government and politics of having instant and continuous media accessibility and
connectivity?

**FALL 2015**

T TH 9:30-10:45am

DuSable 459

**Instructor:** Artemus Ward

**Office:** 405 Zulauf Hall

**Office Hours:** T TH 12:30pm-2pm and by appointment.

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**Required Texts**


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**Course Requirements**

**Participation: “Show and Tell”**

It is important for regular consumers of mass media to be savvy about what they
encounter. As such we will begin each class period by discussing current issues
that relates to media and politics, broadly conceived. Each student is required at
to “present” one item for discussion at the beginning of class. Streaming video
will be particularly useful here. You might show a brief clip from a newscast,
comedy program, or website that bears on media and politics, broadly conceived.
You might want to discuss a recent newspaper article, blog post, or website that
bears on our class. “Traditional” show-and-tell objects are welcome too such as
the Walter Cronkite autographed cocktail napkin that has been in your family for
decades. At the start of each class I will ask for volunteers and you can either
come to the front of the class to “show and tell” about your item by using the
computer and projector or you can ask me to pull up your item while you discuss
it at your seat. You can also set it up before class starts. Be sure to add your name
to the “show and tell” list that I will have with me so that you receive credit. One
“show and tell” participation will be sufficient to get full credit for the
participation part of the course. Note: if you wait until the last week or last day of
class you will likely not be able to do your “show and tell” as there will be little time to accommodate many students. Thus, it is highly recommended that you do your show and tell as early in the semester as possible.

Mid-Term Exam

The mid-term will be an on-line, objective test consisting of both true-false and multiple choice questions. Once you begin the exam, you will have 30 minutes to answer 25 questions. Each question is worth 4 points each for a total of 100 points. The test will cover all of the material listed on the syllabus up until mid-term exam point on the syllabus. The test will be available on Blackboard throughout the semester. You may take the test at any time but you must complete it before the end of the course on the date specified on the syllabus.

Research Paper

The research paper requires you to provide an analysis/critique of an aspect of the mass media as it relates to politics and public life.

You are required to choose a person or group in public life and analyze how they use media to deliver their message. For that individual or group, has the medium become the message? Examples of topics include individual politicians at the international, national, state, or local level; governmental agencies and offices, and non-governmental organizations that play a role in public life such as private businesses, interest groups, media organizations, and individuals. If you are unsure of whether your individual or group is appropriate be sure to check with the instructor.

1. Background. Provide a brief background discussion of your actor. For an individual, discuss where they grew up, their education, work history, and all the relevant information that led them to their current position. For a group discuss when and how they were founded, the general demographic makeup, structure of the organization.

2. Media. Identify the media your actor uses to deliver their message. An obvious starting place will be the internet. Does your actor have a web presence, e-mail list, streaming video, etc.? Does your actor regularly appear on television shows, in newspaper articles, etc.?

3. Message. Identify the actor's message. Give examples of recent “messages” that your actor is communicating via the media that you identified.

4. Effect. Discuss what you regard as the effect of your actor's message as delivered by the media you identified. Is your actor enjoying success or failure and can that success or failure be traced to an effective or ineffective message and/or mode of delivery? Is the message clear and effective or confusing and ineffective? Are the media being used appropriately or inappropriately? What evidence is there of your actor's “success” or “failure”? Has the medium become the message?
Your paper must adhere to the following requirements:

a. The paper must be 5-6 pages long and contain at least four different sources such as books or articles that relate to your topic. These sources can be online and can be suggested sources linked from the syllabus and/or sources you locate on your own. They must be discussed and cited in your essay and also listed in your bibliography. While you may use any book or article, in order to earn an “A” on the paper, at least four of your sources must be scholarly books or articles in academic journals. Toward this end I strongly recommend using the NIU library database to locate scholarly books and JSTOR or another scholarly database to find articles in journalism, communications, political science, and other related areas. Note: not all cites found on search engines are scholarly/academic research. Scholarly journals are those that are peer-reviewed and provide original research and arguments. Toward this end I strongly suggest that you work with the NIU librarians to locate appropriate scholarly sources for your paper. Papers that rely on popular sources such as newspaper articles and websites can only earn a “C” at best. Papers that rely on general webpages such as Wikipedia can only earn a “D” at best. Note: course lectures and the required books and readings for the course do NOT count as sources toward this requirement.

b. As with all papers, the paper for this class must be type-written or word-processed, double-spaced, with normal fonts (usually 12 pt.) and margins (at most one inch all around) and no fancy folders (a solid staple in the corner will do just fine). Make sure that you properly attribute and cite whenever you use information from a source such as a book, article, webpage, or film. Your paper must contain citations. You may use any accepted citation format such as within-text-cites, footnotes, or endnotes. Your paper must include a works cited/references/bibliography at the end of your essay. You must use an accepted bibliographic style. Consult a resource such as the Chicago Style manual or similar work if you are unsure of proper citation/bibliographic formats. This is particularly crucial for internet sources. Simply providing the web address (URL) is not sufficient.

c. Before you start writing this or any essay, ask yourself: What is my overall argument/thesis? Am I supporting my position with reasons and/or evidence? Am I structuring my discussion so that it is as clear and comprehensive as it can be? Have I provided examples and explanations for each argument that I advance? What are the possible counter-arguments that my critics might bring up and how would I respond to those criticisms?

d. In grading your essays I will consider whether you have (a) developed a clear and thoughtful thesis, (b) supported your thesis with a well-reasoned and well-organized discussion, (c) taken into account opposing points of view, (d) demonstrated your familiarity with course materials, and (e) followed the paper requirements including length, sources, and the rules of proper grammar, spelling, and citation/bibliographic format. Note: JSTOR is not a source and should not be cited in your bibliography. It is a highly recommended search engine which allows you to locate specific sources.
c. You must submit your papers through SafeAssign on Blackboard.

Final Exam

The final exam is the same format as the midterm but will only include the course material covered AFTER the midterm exam point listed on the syllabus

Grading System

Final grades will be determined by the following scale:

Grades are determined by the following scale:
A (93.5-100), A- (89.5-93.4), B+ (86.5-89.4), B (83.5-86.4), B- (79.5-83.4), C+ (76.5-79.4), C (69.5-76.4), D (59.5-69.4), and F (0-59.4).

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td><strong>Total=</strong></td>
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Note: do not contact the instructor with questions about when grades will be posted. Grades will be posted on Blackboard by the date they are due to be turned in to the University – generally the week after the course ends.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about grades from the NIU Registration and Records website is available at: [http://www.niu.edu/regrec/grading/gradingfaqs.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/regrec/grading/gradingfaqs.shtml)

Course Schedule

Course Introduction

- Lecture: Plan for Success in College (and in Life).
- Review Syllabus.
Media Power and Government Control

- Reading: Censored 2015 – Ch. 1 pp. 29-94.
- Film: All the President’s Men (1976).

Media Ownership and Regulation

- Lecture: Media Ownership and Regulation.
- Reading: Postman - Ch.1-2.

Freedom of the Press

- Lecture: Freedom of the Press.
- Reading: Censored 2015 – Ch. 3.

Prior Restraint

- Reading: Postman - Ch. 3-4.
- Film: Network (1976).

Libel

- Lecture: Libel.
- Reading: Censored 2015 – Ch. 4.

Press and Political Freedom

- Lecture: News Outlets and Their Audiences - Enhancing or Hindering Political Freedom?
- Reading: Postman - Ch. 5.

Suggested Reading:
The Midterm Exam will cover all of the required material listed on the syllabus up to this point.

News Imperatives

- Lecture: News Imperatives - Reporting Routines and Bias.
- Reading: Censored 2015 – Ch. 8.

Suggested Reading:


News as Activism

- Lecture: Media as Policy Makers.
- Reading Postman - Ch. 6 & 7.

Suggested Reading:


Alternative News—Comedy

- Lecture: Alternative News Sources – Comedy
- Reading: Postman - Ch. 8 & 9.

Suggested Reading:

**Alternative News—Popular Music**

• Lecture: Alternative News Sources - Popular Music.
• Reading: Postman - Ch. 10 & 11.

**Mass Mediated Campaigns**

• Lecture: The Political-Media Industrial Complex: Conflict in Campaigns and Elections.
• Reading: *Censored 2015* – Ch. 9 & 10.

**Is There Such a Thing as Good/Positive News?**

• Reading: *Censored 2015* – Ch. 6 & 7.
• Film: *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005).

**Final Research Papers due on Tues Dec. 1 by 12pm (noon). Submit to SafeAssign on Blackboard.**

**Final Exam (and Midterm Exam) must be completed prior to Wed Dec. 8 at 12pm (noon).**

**Course Policies**

Late Work - Any work that you do in this course must be completed by the deadlines listed on the syllabus. You may not, under any circumstances, turn in your work late. You have the entire semester to complete your work. If you leave work to the end of the course and are unable to finish it on time, you will earn a zero. It is your fault for not doing the work sooner in the semester. If you are unable to give the course the attention you should, you should withdraw from the course early in the semester rather than try to complete everything at the end, attempt to turn in late work, or beg for an extension/incomplete. There are no extensions/incompletes and this kind of begging is not only unseemly, it will reflect poorly on you in the eyes of the instructor.

Cheating and Plagiarism - PLAGIARISM, SIMPLY DEFINED, IS TAKING SOMEONE ELSE’S WORDS OR IDEAS AND REPRESENTING THEM AS BEING YOUR OWN. It is specifically prohibited by University regulations, which state:
Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university. (Undergraduate Catalog)

Statement Concerning Students with Disabilities - Northern Illinois University is committed to providing an accessible educational environment in collaboration with the Disability Resource Center. Any student requiring an academic accommodation due to a disability should let his or her faculty member know as soon as possible. Students who need academic accommodations based on the impact of a disability will be encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center if they have not done so already. The Disability Resource Center is located in the 4th floor of the Health Services Building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 [v], 815-753-3000 [TTY] or email at drc@niu.edu.

Undergraduate Writing Awards - The Department of Political Science will recognize, on an annual basis, outstanding undergraduate papers written in conjunction with 300-400 level political science courses or directed studies. Authors do not have to be political science majors or have a particular class standing. Winners are expected to attend the Department's spring graduation ceremony where they will receive a certificate and $50.00. Papers, which can be submitted by students or faculty, must be supplied in triplicate to a department secretary by the end of February. All copies should have two cover pages - one with the student's name and one without the student's name. Only papers written in the previous calendar can be considered for the award. However, papers completed in the current spring semester are eligible for the following year's competition even if the student has graduated.

Department of Political Science Web Site - Undergraduates are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Political Science web site on a regular basis. This up-to-date, central source of information will assist students in contacting faculty and staff, reviewing course requirements and syllabi, exploring graduate study, researching career options, tracking department events, and accessing important details related to undergraduate programs and activities. To reach the site, go to http://polisci.niu.edu