

561: Dealing with the Media
The Honorable Marjorie Margolies
215-746-6528
Room 32, Fels Institute
marjorie@sas.upenn.edu

Fall Term 2008
Mondays, 6:00-9:00
Class meets in the Fels Sweeney
Room

Office Hours:

Please call or e-mail Marjorie for an appointment; usually available Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3-5 pm, as well as after class on Monday evenings.

COURSE BACKGROUND

This course intends to survey the ever-evolving relationship between the media and politics. Particular emphasis is placed on understanding governing, campaigning, and politicking in the world of the 24-hour news media-cycle. This means that while the syllabus will act as a loose guide, assignments and readings will change in response to what is happening in the wider world.

The course will have a particular focus on the upcoming 2008 elections and on how and why the candidates are covered.

The design of the course allows for a flexible workshop format. There will be frequent guest speakers and students are expected to come to those classes prepared to participate in an interactive dialogue. Additionally, there will be regular opportunities throughout the semester for students to exercise what they have learned through in-class media trainings, mock-editorial board interviews, mock press conferences, governing strategy scenarios, campaign strategy scenarios, political advertisement assessments, etc.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

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| ▪ Class participation (including but not limited to the following): | 20% |
| 1. completing the readings | |
| 2. having questions each class and for the various guest speakers | |
| 3. attendance | |
| ▪ Short topical papers | 15% |
| ▪ 2 Short Quizzes | 30% |
| ▪ Final Paper | 35% |

Participation:

Students are responsible for completing the readings for that week before the start of class. In addition to the assigned readings outlined below, students are expected to increase their exposure to the media and politics, and thereby increase their understanding of class themes, through regularly watching **Meet the Press** (10:30-11:30 Sundays, Local Channel 10). The issues

addressed in this program will not only be included in class discussions, short papers, and quizzes, but will also be indispensable in enhancing the student's ability to navigate the world of media and politics. Additionally, each week students are responsible for bringing in an article from a newspaper that relates to class discussion.

Quizzes:

There will be scheduled quizzes throughout the semester drawing both on the reading and classroom discussion.

Topical Paper:

When appropriate, there will be short papers (1-2 pages) related to a current event discussed in class.

Final Paper:

The final paper will be an analysis of politics and journalism in action as experienced on-site. Students will go to a series of press conferences and draw on their experiences there to create a clear, in depth, and insightful account of the way these two entities interrelate. This paper will be discussed extensively during the course. **Paper is due last day of class, December 1.**

Please remember that the schedule is subject to change, including last minute change, based on speaker availability. The course also provides flexibility so should a major news event happen, we can adjust to focus on that.

STUDENT CONDUCT

Students are expected to submit their own work, and presenting the work of others as their own is not acceptable. In recent years, university students around the world have been tempted to appropriate information from the internet and to present it as their own. The incidence of this practice apparently is increasing. Suspected instances of plagiarism or other abuses in this course will be referred to the University Office of Student Conduct, and the students involved will be given grades of Incomplete for the course until the situation is resolved.

All assignments are to be well written and to be submitted in for grading on the date due. On-time submission is a matter of fairness, since delayed assignments may benefit unfairly from the work done on time by other students and presented in class. Students who submit assignments after the date due may receive lower grades at the sole discretion of the professor. For stylistic guidance, the recommended handbook is Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*. Students are advised to study *The Elements of Style* closely if they wish to score well on their written assignments.

ATTENDANCE

The course is planned on the assumption that students will attend all classes; students who miss classes should make arrangements to catch up without delay on the material presented. Final grades of Incomplete will not be given except under extraordinary circumstances such as medical emergencies. Outside these extraordinary circumstances, if work has not been

completed by the end of the course, a final grade will be assigned based on the best information available in the sole discretion of the professor. Students are responsible for meeting all schedule commitments, including drop and add notifications, as well as for meeting all other program and degree requirements.

READINGS

- 1) Course bulk pack is available at Campus Copy Center (on the corner of 39th and Walnut).
- 2) The following books and websites are required. They are available at the University of Pennsylvania Bookstore and Amazon.com.
 - a) Fallows, James. *Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy*. Vintage Books (New York: 1997)
 - b) Jamieson, Kathleen Hall and Waldman, Paul. *The Press Effect: Politicians, Journalists, and the Stories that Shape the Political World*. Oxford University Press (UK:2002).
 - c) Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Back Bay Books (2002).
 - d) Matthews, Chris. *Hardball*.
 - e) Frank, Thomas. *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*.
 - f) Trippi, Joe. *The Revolution Won't Be Televised*.
 - g) Realclearpolitics.com
 - h) Heath, Chip & Dan. *Made to Stick*
- 3) Additional readings will be distributed throughout the course in the form of handouts as important and relevant events present themselves.
- 4) Suggested Readings to further your understanding:
As part of the course reading, please review at least one major newspaper daily (NYT, WaPo, LAT, WSJ), set your radio to NPR (90.9 fm), watch *Face the Nation*, *This Week*, one major nightly newscast, and familiarize yourself with various political blogs. Read enough to ensure that you are familiar with the presidential elections and political happenings in real time.

SCHEDULE BY WEEK

Readings marked with a (*) can be found in the class bulk pack.

ASSIGNED READING FOR EACH WEEK IS TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE START OF CLASS

WEEK 1: Introduction to the Course
Monday, September 8

WEEK 2: Power of the Media
Monday, September 15

Readings:

- Malcolm Gladwell. *The Tipping Point*
- Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman, *The Press Effect*

- Belden Russinello & Stewart, “*Communicating Values*” (*)
- Karen Friedman. *What Reporters Really Want*. (*)

WEEK 3: Campaign Strategy

Monday, September 22

Readings:

- Bruce Newman, *The Marketing of the President* Chapter 1,3 (*)
- P. Sellers *Manipulating the Message in the U.S. Congress* (*)
- Mark Rodeffer “Stand By Your Ad” (*)
- Joshua Green “Why are campaign commercials so bad?” (*)
- DNC “Campaign Planning” (*)
- Deborah Tannen “The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why” (*)

WEEK 4: Historical Framing/Changes in the 24-Hour News Cycle

Monday, September 29

- FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE

- Thomas Frank, *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* pp. 1-109

WEEK 5: Interest groups

Monday February 18th

Readings:

- The White House Project, *Who’s Talking?* (*)
- Skaggs & Anthony, *Winning Young Voters* (*)
- Kate O’Beirne, *Clueless: what women don’t know about politics* (*)
- Andrew Rich and R. Kent Weaver “Think Tanks in the US Media” (*)

Week 6: Media Training/Polling

(QUIZ #1)

Monday, October 6

Readings:

- Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee: Chapter of Polling
- Christine Jahnke, *Conquering the Camera* (*)
- Diane DiResta, *Top Ten Lists* (*)

Week 7: Fall Break: No class

Monday, October 13

Week 8: Governing Strategy

Monday, October 20

Readings:

- Chris Matthews. *Hardball*.
- Lori Cox Han, *Governing from Center Stage* Chapter 5(*)
- Charles Krauthammer “The liberal media smear a great man” (*)

Week 9: Media and Message

Monday, October 27

Readings:

- Heath, Chip & Dan. *Made to Stick*.
- “Focus” handout (*)

Week 10: War, Foreign policy & International angle

Monday, November 3

Readings:

- Susan Carruthers, *The Media at War* (*)
- Brigitte Nacos *Terrorism, The Media, and Foreign Policy* (*)
- Philip Seib *Politics of the Fourth Estate* (*)
- Dan Rather *Truth on the Battlefield* (*)

Week 11: Scandal/Dealing with crises/Dirty tricks

Monday, November 10

Readings:

- Laurence Jarvik. *Sex and the President* (*)
- Sean Wilentz. *Will Pseudo-Scandals Decide the Election?* (*)
- Lori Cox Han. *Governing from Center Stage* Chapter 6 (*)

WEEK 12: Weaknesses of the Media

(QUIZ #2)

Monday, November 17

Readings:

- James Fallows. *Breaking the News*
- Russell Baker. *Will the Media Be the End of Us?* (*)

Week 13: The Alternative Forms of Media

Monday, November 24

Readings:

- Joe Trippi. *The Revolution Won't Be Televised*.
- Joe Trippi. *Only the Grassroots Can Save the Democratic Party*. (*)
- Drudge Report

WEEK 14: Closing

Monday, December 1

- FINAL PAPERS DUE