

THE MASS MEDIA AND POLITICS
POLS/COMM 207 (30158; 30268), Fall 2009, Dr. Graber

The mass media are a powerful influence on politics. They shape average people's and political leaders' perceptions of the political world. These perceptions become the basis for political opinions and actions. The mass media are particularly important when profound political changes happen rapidly, during political campaigns and elections, and in times of war and political violence. That is why political leaders try hardest at such times to control what the news covers and how news reports are framed.

This course presents an overview of what we know about the interplay between the government, the media, and the public and its impact on various aspects of political life in the United States. We will examine mass media effects on individuals, on groups, and on society and public policies in general. Major technological developments are changing the news media scene in unforeseen ways. That makes it an exceptionally exciting time to take a close look at a revolution in progress.

Required texts for this course are:

1. Doris A. Graber, Mass Media and American Politics. Washington: CQ Press, 8th ed., 2010.
2. Doris A. Graber, editor, Media Power in Politics. Washington: CQ Press, 5th ed. 2007 (a collection of selected readings).
3. Darrell M. West, Air Wars: 1952-2008. Washington: CQ Press, 5th ed., 2010.
4. Downloads from <http://caselaw.com> (*New York Times Company v. U.S.*) & <http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.com/2009> (PEJ)
#1 Special Reports (Citizen-based media, New ventures); Ethnic
#2 Online Journalist Survey; Online; Audio
#3 Overview; About the Study (Methodology)

Exams and Exercises

There will be three 50 minute exams, covering lectures, class discussions, and assigned readings. They will be given on Thursdays during the 5th, 10th, and 15th week of the course. The exams will constitute 60 percent of your final grade. Each exam is worth 20 points. There will be *no* comprehensive final examination. Students who have missed an examination may take a make-up during the time scheduled for final exams: Monday morning, December 7th, 10:30 to 12:30.

Thirty percent of your final grade will be based on 3 brief exercises, each worth 10 points. Class attendance and participation count for another 10 points. Details about these exercises will be discussed in class. Exercise reports will be accepted at any time until the start of class on the due date, listed in the syllabus, but NOT thereafter. Since this is an ironclad rule, it is a good idea to submit your exercise reports prior to the due date. If you wish to substitute a project of your own choice in place of one of the required exercises, please discuss your plans with the instructor during the first three weeks of the semester.
Instructor's Office: 1110 BSB (312-996-3108), email: dgrab@uic.edu .

Tentative Time Schedule and Reading Assignments

All assignments are listed on a weekly basis and should be completed by the Tuesday due date because class discussions will require familiarity with the readings. Lectures will cover materials that are not part of the assigned readings. Therefore, it is essential to attend all class sessions. There will be a grade point penalty for students whose record shows more than three unexcused absences from class.

<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Aug. 25	1. Introduction; the role of the news media in democratic societies	Text: ch. 1; Reader: #1
Sept. 1	2. The ongoing debate about media effects; specialized media	Reader: # 2 PEJ: #1
Sept. 8	3. Mass media control and ownership; formal & informal regulations; media staffs	Text: ch. 2 Rdr: #11-12,31,35-36
Sept. 15	4. Gate-keeping & agenda-setting; how journalists shape the news <i>First exercise due September 15th</i>	Text: ch. 4 Reader: # 6-8
Sept. 22 <u>Exam 9-24</u>	5. Media coverage of political and social crises; homeland security problems	Text: ch. 5 Rdr: # 9-10, 33-34
Sept. 29	6. The interpretation of constitutional guarantees; recent court cases	Text: ch. 3 http://caselaw.com
Oct. 6	7. The mass media and political socialization; political learning and memory	Text: ch. 7; Rdr: # 29-30 West,: ch. 5
Oct. 13	8. The role of the mass media in elections: reporting, interpreting, persuading	Text: ch. 8; Rdr:# 16-18; West: ch. 1-4
Oct. 20	9. The role of advertising in elections: strategies, tactics and messages <i>Second exercise due October 20th</i>	West: ch. 6-10 Rdr. # 13-15
Oct. 27 <u>Exam 10-29</u>	10. The impact of the mass media on the Presidency and Congress	Text: ch. 9; Rdr: # 19- 22
Nov. 3	11. The impact of the mass media on the courts and on state and local politics	Text: ch. 10; Rdr: # 23-24, 32
Nov. 10	12. The media as policymakers; the role of investigative reporting	Text: ch. 6 Rdr: # 3- 5, 28
Nov. 17	13. How news media construct foreign policy images and influence policies <i>Third exercise due November 17th</i>	Text: ch. 11 Rdr: # 25-27,
Nov. 24	14. The changing media technology scene; Policies for a new century	Text: ch. 12; PEJ: #2
Dec. 1 <u>Exam 12-3</u>	15. Concluding discussion, course review	PEJ: #3