**Media, Politics and Government**  
**SMPA 3428 CRN: 13011/ PSC 2228 CRN: 21931**  
**Fall 2014. Thursdays, 3:40-6:10. SMPA Room 306**

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**Office hours: Thursdays 10-12 and by appointment**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course focuses on the interaction between the news media and the policy and political process. We will explore the workings of all the major players in this interaction, from the mainstream media and emerging web-based outlets to the White House, Congress, lobbyists, interest groups and political strategists. How do these institutions make decisions? How do they react to outside forces and events? How do they interact with each other? And how does that interaction impact public opinion, legislation and political campaigns? The course does this through a series of case studies that are happening right in front of us and unfolding during the semester. We will start by examining how President Obama is communicating this fall during the off-year elections: where he goes, what he says, who he meets, what he looks like, what platforms and channels he uses, etc. We’ll draw lessons from the campaign of 2012: how the candidates used social media, as well paid advertising on TV and online; the role of Super PACs, negative ads, the growth of online advertising and other related topics. We’ll look closely at each campaign and how they shaped their messages, used surrogates, reached out to different constituencies, utilized different media outlets. And we’ll use the 2014 campaign as a laboratory to study themes, strategies, and technologies as they evolve in front of us. In future weeks we will discuss such questions as: How does a president use the bully pulpit to shape his message? How does he use presidential travel and surrogates to advance his cause? How does he play the role of Entertainer-in-Chief? How is the White House applying advanced media techniques, developed during the campaign, to the process of governing? How is Obama reaching out to ordinary people around the globe using those techniques, particularly in the Muslim world? How do freedom fighters-and terrorists-both use new media to advance their causes? We will also take advantage of news as it breaks: such as the very latest in themes and appeals used by both parties to raise
campaign cash. The point is to use what’s happening right in front of us to draw larger lessons about the interaction of officials and the media.

**COURSE PREREQUISITES**

No formal pre-requisites but a highly developed interest in politics and policy is strongly recommended. Good jobs and internships are just as useful-perhaps more useful-than specific courses in preparing for this class.

**TEXTS**

No texts, they would be out of date before they are published. All reading material-and there is a lot of it-will be provided by the professor at no cost to you in two forms: packets of articles I have collected and reprinted; links to articles, videos, blog posts that will be sent to you online (as you know I’ve already started doing this over the summer). I also expect you to stay current with a variety of news sources, from mainstream outlets like the NYTimes and Washington Post to bloggers (Eric Wemple, Jeff Jarvis) and websites (Politico, National Journal) that view the world from a wide variety of perspectives. A number of writers specialize in media issues, among those I find most useful: David Carr (NYTimes), John Dickerson (CBS), Ron Brownstein (National Journal) Jay Rosen (Press Think) Jeff Jarvis (Buzz Machine) Michael Calderone (Huffington Post) Brian Stelter (CNN) Dylan Byers and Hadas Gold (Politico). The website Real Clear Politics is a good digest and aggregator for political/media news; Poynter. Org publishes a daily digest of media news and you can sign up for a free daily email.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Pick up a newspaper, watch a TV report or commercial, read a blog post or twitter feed and understand how that information was produced, why it was produced, and what impact it will have.

2. Produce an in-depth analysis of a political or public policy issue from an academic, nonpartisan perspective. The emphasis will be on training students to master wide-ranging research, rigorous thought and lucid writing.

3. Succeed in any intensive program of graduate study (especially law school) or demanding professional assignment in a wide variety of institutions: from media outlets and public relations firms to polling organizations, media strategists, political campaigns, and government offices.
on all levels. Even if students do not eventually choose these professional paths they will all be smarter citizens better equipped to participate in civic life.

**GRADING**

My grading standards are tough but fair. 'As' are hard to get and reserved for truly exceptional work. But I will work personally with any student who needs extra help and is willing to put in the time and effort required to improve. There are two papers and a final and each one counts for one-third of your grade. The tone and approach I am looking for is informed analysis. Written work should not be an editorial or a set of partisan talking points; but I don't want a string of quotes unearthed from other sources either. I want to hear your voice-informed, analytical, thoughtful-that marshals your research behind your arguments. I do not always average those grades on a strict formula; if a student shows significant improvement in the course of a semester I will reward that effort by weighting the exam and the second paper more heavily. Paper topics are handed out at least two weeks before they are due and the deadline is clear. However, I realize you often have a great deal of work in the middle and at the end of every semester and I will try to be reasonable when it comes to extensions. I'd rather have your best work than a shoddy job dashed off against a deadline. It is not possible to quantify a grading standard in a class like this. But I provide extensive comments on each paper, explaining what I thought you did well-and what you can improve on. It's my job to help you get better and I will do that.

**CLASS POLICIES**

Since this class meets only once a week, regular attendance is absolutely essential. I understand emergencies-a crisis at work, a sick grandmother-but any pattern of frequent absence will not be tolerated. The core of this class takes every week in room 306, as we discuss and analyze the issues in front of us, and simply reading the material or copying someone else's notes cannot duplicate that experience or offer the same benefits. (If you are faced with an on-going crisis that is sapping your attention and energy, please let me know privately and I will make every effort to help you get through it.) Moreover, this is not a lecture class, but a large seminar. I expect every student to come in prepared to talk. I know some of you are more
comfortable speaking up than others but I will include everyone and make sure your views are heard and respected. I don't quantify class participation as part of your grade but I consider it very important, and often use it to round-up or round down a grade if a student's average is not completely clear. This is a large class but I promise you, I will get to know everyone's name and something about you.

**OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

I have regular office hours but I find that students often don't use them; for that reason I set aside several full days and encourage students to make an appointment and come see me in my office. You each get a half-hour and you can talk about whatever is on your mind. This is not mandatory, but you are all seniors facing many questions about the future, including jobs and grad schools, relationships and parents, and if I can help you thread your way through this difficult period my door is open. Toward that end I take my classes out to Friday's several times a year so we can meet in a more relaxed atmosphere and chat informally. I want you to look forward to this class. I will do my best to make it lively, stimulating and fun, but I need your help. I expect you to be informed, thoughtful and awake. Together we can have a great semester.

Welcome!

**University Policy on Religious Holidays**

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance;
2. Faculty should extend to these students the comiesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations;
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course related activities

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." For the remainder of the code, see:
http://www.gwu.edu/egrity/code.html

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM
DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/
AcademicSupportServices

SECURITY

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location