

# Media and Politics

## Course Overview

This seminar covers recent and classic empirical research on the relationship between media (broadly understood) and politics. Content spans foundational studies, media effects on political outcomes, the rise of digital platforms, polarization, misinformation, protests, censorship, propaganda, and the changing structure of news economics. Throughout the course, we will see how paradigms developed in the early years continue to influence scholars today, as well as the issues they still debate and critique. Because it would be impossible to cover all aspects of media research even in a comprehensive survey course, this seminar will focus on relatively recent, more quantitative work influenced by the political science literature.

## Course Objective

1. Understand the interaction of the macro-political environment and media ecology
2. Evaluate how the media shape micro-political behavior through mediating information flow
3. Appreciate how quantitative methods are applied in the study of political communication

## Prerequisites

This course is designed for advanced undergraduate and postgraduate students interested in media and politics. Students enrolled in this course are expected to have basic knowledge of statistics, quantitative methods, and social science. Students who want to develop their future research agenda in political communication are especially welcome.

## Assessments

- 10% – In-class participation
  - Active participation is required
  - Each student is required to lead the discussion for one seminar
- 20% x2 – response papers
  - Write a 1000-word response paper to the readings of one research cluster (Part A, B, C, or D)
  - Can be submitted at any time during the term
- 50% – Research Proposal (5% research prospectus; 15% presentation; 30% final report)
  - A research proposal with a research question, a literature review, hypotheses, and methods

## Course Structure

In each session, I will lead the graduate students to discuss the readings on their key concepts, argument, methodology, and implications in a comparative perspective, alongside two students assigned as the discussion leaders. The two students must write a 2-page response paper to the readings, based on the discussion areas above, from their own perspectives.

## Weekly Schedule and Readings

### Part A Theocratical Foundation

*Week 1 Introduction and Theoretical Foundations*

- Beniger, J. R. (1993). Communication-Embrace the Subject, Not the Field. *Journal of Communication*, 43(3), 18-25.
- Chaffee, S. H., & Kanihan, S. F. (1997). Learning about politics from the mass media. *Political Communication*, 14(4), 421-430.
- Klapper, J. T. (1957). What we know about the effects of mass communication: The brink of hope. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 21(4), 453-474.
- Strömberg, D. (2015). Media and politics. *Annual Review of Economics*, 7(1), 173-205.

#### *Week 2 Media ecology and political system*

- Curran, J., Iyengar, S., Brink Lund, A., & Salovaara-Moring, I. (2009). Media system, public knowledge and democracy: A comparative study. *European Journal of Communication*, 24(1), 5-26.
- Deutsch, K. W. (1963). *The nerves of government: Models of Political Communication and Control*. New York: Free Press. (Chapter 1)
- Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2019). Informational autocrats. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 33(4), 100-127.
- Wolfsfeld, G., Sheaffer, T., & Althaus, S. L. (2022). *Building theory in political communication: The Politics-Media-Politics approach*. Oxford University Press. (Chapter 1)

#### *Week 3 Media History and Technological Change*

- Beniger, J. R. (1986). *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Chapter 1)
- Munger, K., Guess, A., & Hargittai, E. (2021). *Quantitative description of digital media: A modest proposal to disrupt academic publishing*. *Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media*, 1, 1-13.
- Natale, S., & Balbi, G. (2014). Media and the imaginary in history: The role of the fantastic in different stages of media change. *Media History*, 20(2), 203-218.
- Tucker, J. A., Theocharis, Y., Roberts, M. E., & Barberá, P. (2017). From liberation to turmoil: Social media and democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 28(4), 46-59.

### Part B Media Ecology

#### *Week 4 Polarization and its consequences*

- Bail, C. A., et al. (2018). Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(37), 9216–9221.
- Boxell, L., Gentzkow, M., & Shapiro, J. M. (2017). Greater internet use is not associated with faster growth in political polarization among US demographic groups. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(40), 10612–10617.
- Westwood, S. J., Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., & Malhotra, N. (2018). The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 21, 369–386.
- Min, C., Shen, F., & Wu, Y. (2025). Does Online Incivility Mobilize or Demobilize Political Participation? Evidence From Hong Kong's Social Movement. *International Journal of Communication*, 19, 30.

#### *Week 5 Media Consumption, Selective Exposure, and Echo Chamber*

- Cinelli, M., De Francisci Morales, G., Galeazzi, A., Quattrocioni, W., & Starnini, M. (2021). The echo chamber effect on social media. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(9), e2023301118.
- Eveland Jr, W. P., & Scheufele, D. A. (2000). Connecting news media use with gaps in knowledge and participation. *Political Communication*, 17(3), 215-237.
- de Benedictis-Kessner, J., Baum, M. A., Berinsky, A. J., & Yamamoto, T. (2019). Persuading the enemy: Estimating the persuasive effects of partisan media with the preference-incorporating choice and assignment design. *American Political Science Review*, 113(4), 902-916.
- Prior, M. (2005). News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3), 577-592.

#### *Week 6 Media Economics and Platform Power*

- Hindman, M. (2018). *The internet trap: How the digital economy builds monopolies and undermines democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Chapter 1)
- Munger, K. (2020). All the news that's fit to click: The economics of clickbait media. *Political Communication*, 37(3), 376-397.
- Obar, J. A., & Oeldorf-Hirsch, A. (2018). The clickwrap: A political economic mechanism for manufacturing consent on social media. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(3), 2056305118784770.
- Usher, N. (2014). *Making news at the New York Times*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. (Chapter 1)

#### *Week 7 (Online) Opinion leaders in political communication*

- Choi, S. (2015). The two-step flow of communication in Twitter-based public forums. *Social science computer review*, 33(6), 696-711.
- Habel, P. D. (2012). Following the opinion leaders? The dynamics of influence among media opinion, the public, and politicians. *Political Communication*, 29(3), 257-277.
- Harff, D., & Schmuck, D. (2023). Influencers as empowering agents? Following political influencers, internal political efficacy and participation among youth. *Political Communication*, 40(2), 147-172.
- Kluever, H. (2024). Social influencers and election outcomes. *Comparative Political Studies*, 58(13), 2973-2999.

#### *\*Research prospectus due*

#### *Part C Media and Political Behavior*

#### *Week 8 Political campaign and advertisement*

- Bob, C. (2001). Marketing rebellion: insurgent groups, international media, and NGO support. *International Politics*, 38(3), 311-334.
- Franz, M. M., & Ridout, T. N. (2007). Does political advertising persuade? *Political Behavior*, 29(4), 465-491.
- Woolley, S. C. (2022). Digital propaganda: The power of influencers. *Journal of Democracy*, 33(3), 115-129.
- Zhao, X., & Chaffee, S. H. (1995). Campaign advertisements versus television news as sources of political issue information. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 59(1), 41-65.

### *Week 9 Collective Action and Mobilization*

- Enikolopov, R., Makarin, A., & Petrova, M. (2020). Social media and protest participation: Evidence from Russia. *Econometrica*, 88(4), 1479-1514.
- Roscigno, V. J., & Danaher, W. F. (2001). Media and mobilization: The case of radio and southern textile worker insurgency, 1929 to 1934. *American Sociological Review*, 66(1), 21-48.
- Klandermans, B., & Goslinga, S. (1996). Media discourse, movement publicity, and the generation of collective action frames: Theoretical and empirical exercises in meaning construction. In D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy, & M. N. Zald (Eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (pp. 312–337), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, H. T., Ping, S., & Chen, G. (2015). Far from reach but near at hand: The role of social media for cross-national mobilization. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 53, 443-451.

### *Part D Information Manipulation*

#### *Week 10 Surveillance and Censorship*

- Gohdes, A. R. (2020). Repression technology: Internet accessibility and state violence. *American Journal of Political Science*, 64(3), 488-503.
- Rozenas, A., & Stukal, D. (2019). How autocrats manipulate economic news: Evidence from Russia's state-controlled television. *The Journal of Politics*, 81(3), 982-996.
- King, G., Pan, J., & Roberts, M. E. (2013). How censorship in China allows government criticism but silences collective expression. *American Political Science Review*, 107(2), 326-343.
- Zhu, Y., & Fu, K. W. (2021). Speaking up or staying silent? Examining the influences of censorship and behavioral contagion on opinion (non-) expression in China. *New Media & Society*, 23(12), 3634-3655.

#### *Week 11 Propaganda and Framing*

- Lecheler, S., & De Vreese, C. H. (2012). News framing and public opinion: A mediation analysis of framing effects on political attitudes. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 89(2), 185-204.
- Lutscher, P. M., & Donnay, K. (2025). Does Hard Propaganda (Also) Work in Democracies? Evidence from the United States. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1-18.
- Mattingly, D., Incerti, T., Ju, C., Moreshead, C., Tanaka, S., & Yamagishi, H. (2025). Chinese state media persuades a global audience that the “China model” is superior: Evidence from a 19-country experiment. *American Journal of Political Science*, 69(3), 1029 – 1046.
- Zhu, Y., & Fu, K. W. (2024). How propaganda works in the digital era: Soft news as a gateway. *Digital Journalism*, 12(6), 753-772.

#### *Week 12 Disinformation, Misinformation, and Fake News*

- Humphrecht, E. (2019). Where ‘fake news’ flourishes: a comparison across four Western democracies. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(13), 1973-1988.
- Liu, J. (2021). Rumoring, disinformation, and contentious politics in the digital age. In G. López-García, D. Palau-Sampio, B. Palomo, E. Campos-Domínguez, & P. Masip (Eds.), *Politics of Disinformation* (pp. 255–273). Wiley.
- Pierri, F., Luceri, L., Jindal, N., & Ferrara, E. (2023, April). Propaganda and misinformation on Facebook and Twitter during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In *Proceedings of the 15th ACM web science conference 2023* (pp. 65-74).

Valenzuela, S., Halpern, D., Katz, J. E., & Miranda, J. P. (2019). The paradox of participation versus misinformation: Social media, political engagement, and the spread of misinformation. *Digital Journalism*, 7(6), 802-823.

*Week 13 Presentation*

*Week 14 Presentation*