Overview:
The primary purposes of this course are to instill in the student a basic understanding of the nature of mass media communication in society, the institutional structure of the media, and the role of the media in American political life. As a major source of political information, the mass media bears an enormous influence on American politics, policy outcomes, the behavior of elites, and the beliefs and opinions of ordinary citizens. This course covers the following 4 major themes associated with media and politics:

(a) Media Structure, Content, and Production
Why is it that certain news stories are covered whereas others are suppressed? What are the roles and responsibilities of American journalists? How does media ownership and government regulation affect the mass media and the information you are exposed to? What are the differences between various types of media organizations, such as “the corporate media” and “independent media”?

(b) Elites and the Mass Media
How do ambitious politicians use the media to forward their political goals? How are American political campaigns conducted? What types of advertising strategies are effective? How does the presence and practices of the media shape the behavior of elected officials and other prominent political actors?

(c) Citizens and the Media
What role does the mass media play in mass political socialization? Does the mass media affect the ways in which people think, feel, and act? Can media messages persuade and change attitudes or do they simply reinforce preexisting beliefs? On the other hand, how do citizens use the media to advance their own interests and how effective are citizen efforts at engaging in media activism?

(d) Popular Culture and Political Awareness
How do mediums other than explicit political information sources influence our political beliefs, attitudes, preferences, and behaviors? How do non-explicitly political messages, such as those transmitted through popular entertainment vehicles like television, movies, music, magazines, internet, and advertisements, directly and indirectly shape our social and political awareness?

Accompanying the goal of developing knowledge in these four areas, the secondary goal of this course will be to continuously strive to link what is being read, learned, and discussed, to important underlying issues and concerns, such as the state of American democracy, inequalities in American society, the politics of race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation, and evaluating our current efforts in managing various problems facing us in the 21st century, such as military conflict, national security, environmental destruction, economic crises, and public health and well-being. While political science is the major discipline that will be brought to bear in exploring these major themes and topics, the course will also rely heavily on other disciplines, such as psychology, communications, and sociology. This course will rely on multiple teaching mediums, such as in-class discussions, videos, viewing campaign advertisements, and lectures. The final goal of this course is to prepare students for democratic citizenship by augmenting your political awareness, interest in politics, sense of citizen duty, and capacity for independent thought and critical analysis of the American political scene.
Requirements & Grading:

Prerequisites: POL 102 or POL 105

For each class meeting I have listed required readings. Students are expected to come to class having read everything on the required reading list. The required texts for the course are:


Any reading assignments not from these two texts will be provided in class or made available on our course website on Blackboard, [http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu](http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu).

The focus of this course is learning and thinking, not memorization and regurgitation. There will be no MIDTERM or FINAL examinations for this course. Instead, the course will rely more heavily on student READING, CLASS PARTICIPATION, and MEDIA EXPOSURE. To ensure that students are holding up their end of the bargain and actually completing the assigned readings, the core of each student’s grade in this class will be based upon weekly reading-check quizzes. Grading will be based upon students’ scores on 15 weekly reading-check quizzes, 5 political news coverage assignments, and participation in class discussions. The actual percentage breakdown in terms of final course grade is as follows:

15 Weekly Reading Quizzes (50%)
5 Political News Coverage Assignments (40%)
Class Participation (10%)

Reading-Check Quizzes:
The reading quizzes are in place for me to make sure that you are doing the reading. There are 15 weeks of class meetings with assigned readings, and thus there will be 1 randomly administered reading-check quiz each week for each of these 15 weeks. Each reading check quiz will consist of 10 multiple choice and true/false questions. These will be derived from the assigned readings for the specific class meeting in which the quiz is administered (if the quiz is on Monday, it will cover the readings due that Monday). There will be ABSOLUTELY NO make-up quizzes: Up to 3 missed/lowest scoring quizzes will be given the value of the average score of all of your taken quiz scores at the end of the semester. After three missed quizzes, the student receives a zero that is non-negotiable. There will be one quiz a week, but I will not tell you in advance which day. This will be done to encourage students to read for each class meeting.

Political News Coverage Assignments:
The primary purpose of these assignments is to provide students with an opportunity to review news stories, assess the manner in which issues/events are covered, and apply concepts and theoretical frameworks from course readings and lectures to their discussion of media coverage of issues and events. Increasing ones awareness, information, and concern about important social, political, and economic events in the national and international arena is essential to democratic citizenship. The secondary purpose of these assignments is simply to get students to pay attention to news issues, to think about matters that transcend the concerns of college life, and to think about how these events matter to you, the country, the world, at all?

This assignment essentially requires students to read two news articles per week. Every three weeks, on the Wednesday meeting, students will be required to turn in the 6 new articles they read as well as a
reflection paper. There are 5 of these assignments for this course. The details of this assignment are as follows:

- 2 articles per week, 6 per each assignment, dated for confirmation, submitted with reflection paper. Refer to Class Schedule for due dates.
- No more than 3 articles per assignment can cover the same issue, and these three articles on the same issue must appear on different days or news sources.
- Articles must be relevant to issues of politics, government, labor & economy, public opinion, citizen participation, or foreign affairs.
- 2 of the 6 articles must address an issue deemed a social/political problem.
- 1 of the 6 articles must be from www.democracynow.org.
- 1 and only 1 of the 6 articles must be from a Political Blog.
- Reflection paper should be at least 4 pages, but no longer than 5 pages (double spaced).
- Reflection paper must address the following questions for each distinct issue/event:
  - Why has the media selected this issue/event for coverage?
  - Whether or not you think the issue/event is newsworthy?
    - Does the issue affect your life? If not, why? If so, how?
    - Does the issue affect other people? Who and How?
    - Do the authors of articles tell you why the article is newsworthy, i.e. does the article contain messages telling you how the issue/event affects you/others and/or why you should care?
  - How has the issue/event been covered—Sobriety or Sensationalism? Balanced or biased?
  - How does this issue/event relate, if at all, to any material covered in the course?

*No Late Assignments will be accepted. If you are unable to make it to class on the day a news assignment is due, you must email the assignment before the start of class (5:20pm) in order to receive any credit. Assignments received after the start of class will NOT be accepted. All emailed assignments must be submitted in Microsoft Word; No works files or Zipped files will be accepted.

Class Participation:
Credit will be allotted based upon the following rule of thumb: If at the end of the semester I don’t even recognize your name or face, you will receive no credit; if I recognize you as a very participatory student you receive full credit; if you lie somewhere in the middle, you will get some form of partial credit.

The University Senate Undergraduate and Graduate Councils have authorized that the following required statements appear in all teaching syllabi (graduate and undergraduate courses) on the Stony Brook Campus:

**Americans with Disabilities Act:**
If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

**Academic Integrity:**
Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report and suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/

**Critical Incident Management:**
Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn.

**Disclaimer:** The instructor reserves the right to amend or correct this course syllabus as necessary. If the instructor amends or corrects this syllabus, students will be properly notified of any changes.
Class Schedule & Reading Assignments

Week 1
M 1/31 Introduction to Course
W 2/2 Functions and Importance of the Media
   Reading: Graber, chpt. 1

Week 2
M 2/7 Critical Perspectives on the Media
   Reading: Parenti, Democracy for the Few, chpts. 3 “The Plutocratic Culture” & 13 “Mass Media: For the Many, By the Few”
W 2/9 Critical Perspectives on the Media
   Reading: Chomsky, Necessary Illusions, chpt. 1 “Democracy and the Media”

Week 3
M 2/14 Critical Perspectives on the Media
   Reading: Manufacturing Consent, chpt. 1 “A Propaganda Model”
W 2/16 Ownership and Regulation of Media (net neutrality)
   Reading: Graber, chpt. 2
Due: Political News Coverage Assignment #1

Week 4
M 2/21 Press Freedom and Constraints
   Reading: Graber, chpt. 3
W 2/23 News Making, Reporting Routines, and Local News
   Reading: Graber, chpt. 4 & chpt. 10, pages 267-280

Week 5
M 2/28 News Making: Extraordinary Events
   Reading: Graber, chpt. 5 & Democracynow.org, July 7, 2010 “Media Clampdown in the Gulf Coast.” & Democracynow.org, January 10, 2011 “Politics in Arizona Have Become Fueled By Hate”
W 3/2 Journalists as Political Actors
   Reading: Graber, chpt. 6

Week 6
M 3/7 Media and Politicians
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/16/nyregion/16citytime.html?_r=1&ref=citytime
W 3/9 Media and Politicians
   Reading: Graber, chpt. 9 & chpt. 10, pages 259-267 & Democracynow.org, January 7, 2010 “From Wall Street to the White House.”
Due: Political News Coverage Assignment #2

Week 7
M 3/14 Media Effects on Citizens
   Reading: Graber, chpt. 7
W 3/16 Foreign Affairs
Reading: Graber, chpt. 11 & Democracynow.org, January 28, 2011 “Uprising in Egypt”

Week 8
M 3/21 Foreign Affairs

W 3/23 Foreign Affairs

Week 9
Topics in the Media/Media Politics
M 3/28 Media Activism for Citizens

W 3/30 Media Activism—Independent Media Organizations
Reading: Gene Hyde, “Independent Media Centers: Cyber-Subversion and the Alternative Press”
http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/944/866
Mitchell, “Breaking the Broadband Monopoly.”

Due: Political News Coverage Assignment #3

Week 10
M 4/4 Advertising and Consumer Capitalism
Reading: Naomi Klein, No Logo, TBA

W 4/6 Media Activism—Culture Jamming
Reading: Kalle Lasn, Culture Jam, “Introduction” & “Autumn”

Week 11
M 4/11 Media Activism—Whistle Blowing & Controversy over WikiLeaks

W 4/13 Popular Culture and Entertainment

Week 12
No Classes (Spring Break)
Due: Political News Coverage Assignment #4 (4/18, email by 5:20pm)

Week 13
M 4/25 Media and the Politics of Race
   Reading: Holtzman, Media Messages, “Stories of Race in Popular Culture”
W 4/27 Media and the Politics of Race—The Racialization of Welfare

Week 14
M 5/2 Media and the Politics of Race—Obama and the Myth of a Post-Racial Society
W 5/4 Media and the Politics of Class
   Reading: Holtzman, Media Messages, “Is the United States a Classless Society?”

Week 15
M 5/9 Media and the Politics of Gender
   Reading: Holtzman, Media Messages, “Gender: In Pink and Blue and Vivid Color.”
W 5/11 Media and the Politics of Sexual Orientation
   Reading: Holtzman, Media Messages, “Sexual Orientation and the Fabrication of “Normal”.”

Due: Political News Coverage Assignment #5
(Last Day of Classes is 5/13)

Week 16
M 5/16
W 5/18
(Finals Week: No Class Meetings, No Final Exam)