Graduate Seminar in Political Communication
E58.2175, Spring 2010

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New York, NY 10003

Course Description

This course focuses on the essentially communicative aspects of American governing processes, surveying research that analyzes the way in which political candidates at various levels of government are chosen, how they shape their personal image, the process of constructing persuasive message appeals, and their interaction with voters. It will also focus on how elected officials set political and legislative agendas, use public relations strategies to shape public policy, and otherwise engage in the process of political deliberation. The media in which these processes take place will be an additional focus, including the influence of news outlets, political campaign advertising, and the work of political advocacy groups of various kinds.

Required Texts:


Assignments

Reading Summaries (20% of Final Grade)
Students are required to complete a 1-page summary of all reading assigned for a given class (1 summary per chapter, unless otherwise noted). Each summary should include, in narrative form, a: statement/description of the author’s thesis/primary argument(s) in a given reading segment; a description, in the students’ own words, of the major concepts central to the authors’ thesis/primary arguments, along with the student’s explanation of what those major terms mean in the context of the reading segment; and an assessment/evaluation of the author’s thesis/arguments. These may include descriptions of questions the author has left unaddressed or unanswered, general criticisms of the author’s arguments, or reactions (positive, negative or otherwise) to the specific evidence-examples-data the author uses to substantiate his or her claims.

Reaction Papers (20% of Final Grade)
At various times throughout the semester, students will be required to not only provide written summaries of assigned reading, but respond to specific questions provided by the professor. These questions will also be based, in part, on assigned readings and should be 350 to 500 words in length. Each summary/reaction paper should be typed, in 12-Point, Times or Times New Roman Font (ONLY), with 1-inch margins on all sides of the page, and include the student’s name and the due date of the assignment at the top of the front page.

**Group Presentation/Discussion (30% of Final Grade)**
As a supplement to the major lecture/discussion areas in the course, groups of students will be responsible for directing and moderating class discussion for one class meeting. The basis of this discussion will be a formal presentation that the group will construct, providing some detailed description and analysis of a particular contemporary case that exemplifies one of the four primary areas of political communication designated by the professor. Presenters should use every means at their disposal (audiovisual or other technology) to both showcase their case study and analysis and to stimulate thoughtful discussion in response to the topic and to the group’s analysis.

**Final Paper (30% of Final Grade)**
Each student will be responsible for completing a research paper on some topic related to race and media. The paper should be 20-25 pages in length and should include a clear statement/overview of the topic, a review of relevant literature and analysis that is conducted in line with widely used research methods in the area of media and communication studies.

**Evaluation Rubric**

**A= Excellent**
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

**B= Good**
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

**C= Average**
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

**D= Unsatisfactory**
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.
F = Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate and/or incomplete assignments

A  = 94-100
A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89
B  = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C  = 74-76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 65-69
D  = 60-64
F  = 0-59

Grade Appeals
Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

Late Assignments
No late assignments will be accepted without prior written permission from the instructor.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Preparation
You are expected to come to class each week fully prepared, which means having read all assigned readings, and having done so in a way that demonstrates adequate comprehension of the material, not just a mere surface reading. It also means that you should come to class having spent some time having carefully reflected on course material, lectures and discussion in a way that allows you to develop a set of questions, critiques, and discussion points related to course material.

Participation
In line with the last point, I expect your preparation to be the basis for your full participation in each course. Participation includes contributing insights, questions, explanations, etc. to class discussions, contributing outside material at times, taking detailed notes on any class lectures, etc. Since each student will take some responsibility for the conduct of the course, I expect that you will be prepared to engage with both me and your fellow classmates who, I will assume have valuable knowledge and perspectives on the course material being covered.

Attendance
Come to class. You will receive much less from the course if you do not attend regularly and less than regular attendance will make it difficult for you to complete your assignments satisfactorily. If you miss class, YOU are solely responsible for getting caught up about lecture material, notes,
assignments, announcements, etc. Do not expect your professor to fill you in. If you have a specific question about something you missed, you should feel free to ask.

**General Decorum**
Slipping in late or leaving early, sleeping, text messaging, surfing the Internet, doing homework in class, eating, etc. are distracting and disrespectful to all participants in the course.

**Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**
“Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do…you violate the principle when you: cheat on an exam; submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home that calls for independent work; or plagiarize. Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions…” (see [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity))

**Student Resources**
- Henry and Lucy Moses Center for students with disabilities ([http://www.nyu.edu/csd/](http://www.nyu.edu/csd/))
- Writing Center: 269 Mercer Street, Room 233. Schedule an appointment online at [www.rich15.com/nyu/](http://www.rich15.com/nyu/) or just walk-in.

**Reasonable Accommodation Policy**
If you have a disability that affects your performance in this course, please notify me at the beginning of the semester and necessary special arrangements can me made to accommodate you.
# Tentative Course Schedule

*All schedule details are subject to change at the professor’s discretion.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 26</td>
<td>The Role and Power of News Media in American Democracy</td>
<td>Documentary: <em>Outfoxed</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2</td>
<td>The Role and Power of News Media in American Democracy</td>
<td>Reading Summary Due: Graber, Chapters 1, 4, 6, 7</td>
<td>Reaction Paper #1 Due</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Presentation Groups Formed</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 9</td>
<td>The Role and Power of News Media in American Democracy</td>
<td>Reading Summary Due: Graber, Chapter 8 &amp; 9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 16</td>
<td>Race and Contemporary Black Politics/Politicians</td>
<td>Documentary: Marshall Curry’s <em>Street Fight</em>, chronicling the 2002 Mayoral contest between Sharp James and Cory Booker.</td>
<td>Abstract of Group Presentation Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 23</td>
<td>Race and Contemporary Black Politics/Politicians</td>
<td>New York Times Panel: Race, the Presidency &amp; Obama’s First Year.</td>
<td>Reading Summary Due: Gillespie, Chapters 1,2,3</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2</td>
<td>Race and Contemporary Black Politics/Politicians</td>
<td>Reading Summary Due: Gillespie, Chapters 6-9</td>
<td>Reaction Paper #2 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>The Politics of Political Advertising</td>
<td>Reading Summary Due: Franz et al., Chapters 1-4</td>
<td>Revised Presentation Abstract Due</td>
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<td>March 16</td>
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<td>March 23</td>
<td>The Politics of Political Advertising</td>
<td>Reading Summary Due: Franz et al., Chapters 5-10</td>
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<td>March 30</td>
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<td>Presentation [Media &amp; Public Policy]</td>
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<td>April 6</td>
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<td>Presentations [Media &amp; the Presidency]</td>
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<td>Revised Final Paper Abstracts Due</td>
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April 13  Presentations [Race, Media Contemporary Minority Campaign]

April 20  Presentations [Political Advertising, Media & Political Campaign]

April 27  Open

Final Papers Due: May 12, 2010.