Political Communication
Political Science 829. Fall 2011. T 1:20-3:15, 7115 Helen C. White Hall

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Office hours: Thurs 1:30-2:30 pm and by appointment
Mailbox: In the lounge across the hall from 110 North Hall. (Enter the door closest to the Lincoln statue. The lounge will be on your right. Once you enter that room, faculty mailboxes are to the left.)

Purpose of the course:
The purpose of this course is to expose you to the history, core concepts, predominant theories, current major topics of research, and methodological tools that will help you conduct research at the frontier of this field. We will focus on debates that have emerged in the top political science journals and top political science academic presses within the past 15 years, reading those works as well as some of the classics on which they are based. This course takes an expansive definition of political communication to focus on such topics as deliberation and political conversation as well as topics more directly related to mass media. The concentration of this course is on political communication in the American context.

This field is interdisciplinary, involving political scientists and scholars of mass communication, agricultural journalism, psychology, and sociology. There is a political communications section within the American Political Science Association (APSA). Although the American Political Science Review (APSR), the American Journal of Political Science (AJPS), and the Journal of Politics (JOP) publish political communications work regularly, there are several more specific publications as well: Public Opinion Quarterly, Political Psychology and especially Political Communication. In addition to the APSA, the Midwest Political Science Association, American Association for Public Opinion Research, the Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research, the International Communication Association, and the International Society of Political Psychology are also relevant professional associations.

Requirements:
You will each write a set of one-page reaction papers, a term paper proposal, and a term paper.
The term paper is due **Friday, December 16**. This will be either a thorough research design which includes a thorough literature review or a report of original research that takes the form of a journal article. Your choice to pursue either a research paper or a research design should be driven by your familiarity with the literature in the area in which you wish to pursue research. You will all be responsible for a thorough understanding of the literature on the topic of your choosing and for formulating a question that is important. That is, your papers should ask a question that addresses a gap in existing literature and whose answer would contribute to scholarship and the broader public. If you can formulate such a question and collect data within the first month or so of class, I strongly encourage you to write a research paper. Otherwise, invest your time in writing a research design paper. The papers should be a concise and focused 17 to 20 pages. **A 2-3 page proposal is due October 4th.**

If you choose to write a research paper, you are responsible for 4 one-page reaction papers. If you choose to write a research design, you are responsible for 6 reaction papers. You may choose which weeks you write these papers, though I encourage you to spread them throughout the course of the term. On the weeks that you write a paper, it is due via email to the class email list (polisci829-1-f08@lists.wisc.edu) **by noon on the Monday before class.** These papers should be reflections and/or critiques on a selection of the week’s readings. By critique, I mean an analysis of the claims, evidence, or methods, which can include praise as well as criticism. The best papers take the following form: They have a brief introduction that identifies a key argument or claim mentioned or implied in the week’s readings. The body of the paper then gives a careful and thorough analysis of the evidence the week’s readings have on this point. This is followed by your reading of this evidence in light of other research, and a rigorous analysis of current events. In other words, the papers focus on one point, ransack the week’s readings for all the details and evidence they have to offer on this point, and include your own original insight. Citing specific pages is encouraged. These papers will be graded. Even if you are auditing the class, I strongly encourage you to write six of these papers.

**We will take turns leading the seminar discussions.** For roughly half of class, one or two of you will lead discussion. The purpose of this is to give you each a turn in setting the agenda for our discussions, and also give you practice in teaching a graduate seminar. You will sign up for a class to lead on the second day of class.

**Grading:**

**I will only give an incomplete for this course under rare circumstances.** Your grade will depend on your performance on the short papers (25%), your participation in class discussions including the day you lead discussion (quality of participation weighted by volume of participation, to count as another 25%), and the term paper (50%). I will grade on an A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+ etc. basis, even though final grades are assigned on an A, AB, B, BC, C basis.
**COURSE MATERIALS:**

The following book is required for the course and is available at a Room of One’s Own, which is located at 307 W. Johnson St. (257-7888). This book is also available in the reserve room at College Library. Most of the readings not found in one of the required texts are available through the UW Library system (use the “Find-It” button on the UW Library home page to locate the pdf files. Here’s the web link for the find-it tool: [http://sfx.wisconsin.edu/wisc/cgi/core/citation-linker.cgi?rft.genre=journal](http://sfx.wisconsin.edu/wisc/cgi/core/citation-linker.cgi?rft.genre=journal). Entering the journal title, year and start page usually gets you to the pdf right away). I will explain how to obtain the remaining readings (those not available electronically through the library) on the first day of class. These are marked with a * in the calendar below. (“Recommended” readings are not included in the course pack.)


### CALENDAR

**9/6**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

**9/13**

2. **THE PLACE OF COMMUNICATION IN DEMOCRACY: FOCUS ON CITIZEN DELIBERATION**

**Sign up to lead one session of class today.**


On the web at: [www.nyu.edu/ipk/calhoun/files/calhounIntroductionHabermasAndThePublicSphere.pdf](http://www.nyu.edu/ipk/calhoun/files/calhounIntroductionHabermasAndThePublicSphere.pdf)


**Recommended:**


3. THE ELITE-DRIVEN MODEL OF OPINION FORMATION

Recommended

4. MASS MEDIA BIAS
DUE: Short (2-3 pages) term paper proposal. Include question you are addressing, a brief overview of previous research relevant to your question, and an explanation of why the question is important for the advance of scholarship.

5. WHO GETS THE NEWS AND WHAT DO WE LEARN?

Recommended:
6. THE TRANSMISSION OF POLITICAL INFORMATION WITHIN SOCIAL NETWORKS


Recommended:


7. THE EFFECT OF MASS MEDIA ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES


Recommended:

10/25
8. FRAMING

Recommended:
Chaps 1-2, 7-9.

11/1
9. MASS MEDIA AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS
Recommended:

11/8
10. **MASS MEDIA AND THE PICTURES IN OUR HEADS**

Recommended:

11/15
11. **THE ORIGINS, CONTENT AND EFFECT OF POLITICAL CONVERSATION**
Recommended:

11/22

12. INTERGROUP COMMUNICATION AND ITS EFFECTS


*Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2007. Talking about Race: Community Dialogues and the Politics of Difference. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. chaps 1, 6 and 9

Recommended:


11/29

13. COMMUNICATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT


Recommended:
12/6

14. PROSPECTS FOR DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY


Available at: www.princeton.edu/~talim/mendelberg%20%20deliberative%20citizen.pdf

12/13

15. FOREIGN POLICY AND MASS MEDIA

**Due: Brief research presentations.** (Length to be determined by number of participants in the seminar).


**TERM PAPERS DUE Friday, December 16 to my mailbox by 5pm.**