

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

# POLITICS AND MEDIA IN A POST-TRUTH ERA

## POL 2143B

### SYLLABUS

Wednesday: 4:30 – 6:30  
Room: UCC 37  
Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 – 3:30  
Or by appointment

Instructor: Prof. Marta Dyczok  
Office: SH 2246  
tel: 661-2111 x84982  
e-mail: [mdyczok@uwo.ca](mailto:mdyczok@uwo.ca)

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#### **Course Description**

Most of us learn about what is happening in politics through the mass media. This course is designed to introduce students to the complex relationship between politics and media in different political systems. It explores how media systems operate and how they influence politics. Topics will range from ownership structures (who owns the media and why it matters), to elections, infotainment, social media, and propaganda. The lecture course will meet once a week, and films will be screened during the course. Students are expected to attend all classes, participate in the discussion, and submit weekly answers to short questions on the readings.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this class students will be able to:

- Explain the relationship between mass media and politics
- Discuss the similarities and differences of media effects in different political systems
- Describe the transformation of political communication and new theoretical approaches
- Describe the main theories and approaches of the media's role in elections, the political process, political participation, social activism
- Demonstrate an understanding of how media can be manipulated as a political tool
- Show improved media literacy skills
- Succinctly summarize key ideas from readings

- Express themselves clearly and analytically in written tests/examinations.

### **Course Requirements**

Students are expected to attend all classes and do all the required readings. Films will be screened during the course, attendance is mandatory. Each class will end with a discussion of the main themes from the lecture and readings. Also, each week students will be asked to provide short written answers (1-2 sentences) for 3 short questions that will be based on the material of the week. This will help students review the material and prepare for the tests and final exam on a regular basis throughout the course. Participation marks will be assigned on the basis of attendance, participation in discussion, and submission of answers to the short questions.

### **Readings:**

#### **Textbook**

Street, John. *Mass media, politics, and democracy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; Palgrave, Macmillan, 2011)

Additional readings will be provided on OWL.

### **Grading Scheme:**

Participation:	10%
Mid-term test	45%
Final Exam	45%

### **Plagiarism and Cheating**

Plagiarism and cheating are considered extremely serious academic offences and carry penalties varying from failure in an assignment of exam to debarment from the University. All Pol 2190 students are expected to familiarise themselves with the definitions of plagiarism and cheating as established in University of Western Ontario before submitting written work or entering the exam (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism Checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **TERM 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

##### **Week 1. Introduction to course themes and requirements**

Street, Introduction

#### **Part 1. REPRESENTING POLITICS**

##### **Week 2. Can Media Be Without Political Bias?**

Street, Chapter 1

##### **Week 3. Everyone Has the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression**

Street, Chapter 2

##### **Week 4. Politics and Entertainment – Infotainment**

Street, Chapter 3

##### **Week 5. How Does Media Affect Public Opinion?**

Street, Chapter 4

##### **Week 6. Mid-Term Test**

#### **Part 2. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY of MASS MEDIA**

##### **Week 7. What Happens When the State Owns and Controls Media**

Street, Chapter 5

##### **Week 8. Do Privately Owned Media Safeguard Free Speech?**

Street, Chapter 6

##### **Week 9. Watchdogs or Lapdogs?**

Street, Chapter 7

##### **Week 10. Globalization and the Webs of Power**

Street, Chapter 8

#### **Part 3. MASS MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY**

##### **Week 11. Transforming Political Communication?**

Street, Chapter 9

**Week 12. New Media, New Politics?**

Street, Chapter 10

**Week 13. Power and Mass Media**

Street, Chapters 11, 12

**APPENDIX TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OUTLINES  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Prerequisite checking - the student's responsibility**

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

**Essay course requirements**

With the exception of 1000-level courses, most courses in the Department of Political Science are essay courses. Total written assignments (excluding examinations) will be at least 3,000 words in Politics 1020E, at least 5,000 words in a full course numbered 2000 or above, and at least 2,500 words in a half course numbered 2000 or above.

**Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")**

"Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning.

Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence."

**Security and Confidentiality of Student Work** (refer to current *Western Academic Calendar* (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/>))

"**Submitting or Returning Student Assignments, Tests and Exams** - All student assignments, tests and exams will be handled in a secure and confidential manner. Particularly in this respect, leaving student work unattended in public areas for pickup is not permitted."

**Duplication of work**

Undergraduate students who submit similar assignments on closely related topics in two different courses must obtain the consent of both instructors prior to the submission of the assignment. If prior approval is not obtained, each instructor reserves the right not to accept the assignment.

**Grade adjustments**

In order to ensure that comparable standards are applied in political science courses, the Department may require instructors to adjust final marks to conform to Departmental guidelines.

**Academic Offences**

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## **Submission of Course Requirements**

**ESSAYS, ASSIGNMENTS, TAKE-HOME EXAMS MUST BE SUBMITTED ACCORDING TO PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR (I.E., IN CLASS, DURING OFFICE HOURS, TA'S OFFICE HOURS) OR UNDER THE INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE DOOR.**

**THE MAIN OFFICE DOES NOT DATE-STAMP OR ACCEPT ANY OF THE ABOVE.**

## **Attendance Regulations for Examinations**

EXAMINATIONS/ATTENDANCE (Sen. Min. Feb.4/49, May 23/58, S.94, S.3538, S.3632, S.04-097) A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations: 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year. 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

## **Medical Policy, Late Assignments, etc.**

Students registered in Social Science should refer to

[http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having\\_problems/index.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having_problems/index.html) for information on Medical Policy, Term Tests, Final Examinations, Late Assignments, Short Absences, Extended Absences, Documentation and other Academic Concerns. Non-Social Science students should refer to their home faculty's academic counselling office.

## **University Policy on Cheating and Academic Misconduct**

**Plagiarism:** Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence." (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

**Plagiarism Checking:** "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ( <http://www.turnitin.com> )."

**Multiple-choice tests/exams:** "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating."

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic\\_policies/index.html](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html)

## PLAGIARISM\*

In writing scholarly papers, you must keep firmly in mind the need to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another writer's words or ideas. Different forms of writing require different types of acknowledgement. The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

**A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.**

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication, and page number.

Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

**B. In adopting other writers' ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.**

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source, these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases in their suspension from the University.

\*Reprinted by permission of the Department of History

Adopted by the council of the Faculty of Social Science, October, 1970; approved by the Dept. of History August 13, 1991

**Accessibility at Western:** Please contact [poliscie@uwo.ca](mailto:poliscie@uwo.ca) if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

The Registrar's office can be accessed for Student Support Services at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services (including the services provided by the USC listed here) can be reached at:  
<http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Services can be reached at: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western  
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.