

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

POLITICS and MEDIA in a GLOBALIZED WORLD

POL 4208F

Autumn 2026

When: Thursday: 1:30 – 3:30
Where: TBD

Instructor: **Prof. Marta Dyczok**
Email: mdyczok@uwo.ca
Office: Department of History, Lawson Hall 2246
Office Hours: TBD

DRAFT SYLLABUS

What This Course is About

Does the government control the media—or do the media control the government? Do the news media educate or manipulate the citizenry? Much of what we know about politics, political leaders, party politics, or public policy comes from the media – social media, television, radio, newspapers, online media and the internet. This course looks at the relationship between politics and media, explores how media, civic engagements, ownership structures and politics are intertwined. It notes how constantly changing technology affects media systems and thus democracy.

Anti/Prerequisite(s):

Antirequisite(s): Political Science 3360F/G, the former Political Science 3350E, or the former Political Science 4460F/G if taken in 2013-14 or 2014-15.

Prerequisite(s): Enrolment in 3rd or 4th year Honours Double Major or Honours Specialization in Political Science or permission of the Department.

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.

How This Course is Structured

This undergraduate course will be conducted in seminar format and meet weekly. Students are expected to attend the weekly classes, participate actively in the seminar discussions, present one seminar during the term, monitor a media outlet (that the student will choose) and report on its main stories weekly, write one research paper OR two policy briefs.

What Students Will Learn

This course is designed to increase student knowledge and skills. At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the main theoretical approaches and discussions in political communications
- Critically evaluate competing media sources and narratives
- Understand the impact/effects of new technologies and social media
- Describe the differences and similarities between misinformation and disinformation
- Explain the dilemmas of information warfare and the impact of media on the political process
- Express themselves clearly and analytically in oral and written assignments

What Students Need to Do

- Complete the assigned weekly required readings
- Attend the weekly seminar
- Participate in weekly in-class discussions
- Prepare and deliver one seminar presentation and moderate the discussion
- Monitor a media outlet (each student will choose) and report on its main stories weekly
- Write an analytical essay **OR** 2 policy briefs

How Students Will Be Evaluated

The grading breakdown is as follows:

1. Seminar Participation 25%
2. Seminar Presentation 25%
3. Media Monitoring 20%
4. Research Paper 30% **OR** 2 Policy Papers 15% each

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. INTRODUCTION

Week 1: Introduction to Course Themes and Requirements
(10 September 2026)

Week 2: Democracy and Media Revisited
(17 September 2026)

Week 3: Understanding Political Communication: Key Theories
(24 September 2026)

II. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEDIA

Week 4: Politics and Media Systems – Who Owns Media and Why it Matters
(1 October 2026)

Week 5: Non-Democratic States I: Russia
(8 October 2026)

Week 6: Non-Democratic States II: China
(9 October 2025)

10 – 18 October 2006 Fall Reading Week NO CLASS

Week 7: What Are Media Effects?
(22 October 2026)

III. NEW MEDIA, ONLINE MEDIA, SOCIAL MEDIA

Week 8. How is Political Communication Transforming? New Media Moguls
(29 October 2026) **Policy Brief 1 Due**

Week 9: Challenges of Regulation and Control
(5 November 2026)

IV. MIS/DISINFORMATION

Week 10: Misinformation
(12 November 2026)

Week 11: Disinformation
(19 November 2026)

Week 12: Case Study: Russia - Ukraine RESEARCH PAPER and Policy Brief 2 DUE
(26 November 2026)

Week 13: A Free Media?

(3 December 2026)

Course Materials

A list of readings will be available through Weldon Library and will be posted weekly on our Brightspace site. Most of the readings will be available on-line, those which are not will be posted on our OWL site. Additional readings may be suggested during the course.

Useful background readings include:

Scammell, Margaret and Holli Semetko (eds.) *The Media, Journalism and Democracy*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000. On-line edition 2018)

Semetko, Holli A. and Margaret Scammell (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Political Communications* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington, DC: SAGE, 2012)

Street, John. *Mass media, politics, and Democracy* 2nd ed. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

I acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.

Additional Statements

PLEASE SEE: <https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/undergraduate/docs/outlines/2025-26/APPENDIX%20TO%20UNDERGRADUATE%20COURSE%20OUTLINES1.pdf>

ALSO

Use of Generative AI Tools

All work submitted in this course must be your own.

The use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, is permitted in this course for activities such as brainstorming and refining your ideas, drafting an outline to organize your thoughts, or checking grammar and style. Any use of such tools should be clearly acknowledged and explained. If in doubt, please ask me for clarification.

Communication policies

The best way to communicate with me is at the end of class or during my office hours which I hold every week in my office. I set aside time every week and make myself available to students who have questions or would like additional information. Students can also contact me via email, and I do my best to respond within 48 hours on business days, not weekends.

General Information about missed work:

“University policy on academic considerations are described here. This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here: https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.”

Formal Documentation Designation statement:

“Please note that all assessments are considered to be central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for any assessments will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for assessments will be provided with the following opportunity to make up this work: deadline extension.

Flexibility statements:

“Please note that because the submission deadline for all written work already includes flexibility in the form of extensions the instructor reserves the right to deny academic consideration for assignments which are submitted following the end of the period of flexibility.”

When a student receives academic considerations or academic accommodations which overlap with the built-in flexibility of the assessment, the longest period of accommodation will determine the deadline. The built-in flexibility of the assessment should not be taken to extend any considerations or accommodations.

Absence from Course Commitments

Students must familiarize themselves with the Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is always required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically schedule during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the Student Medical Certificate or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.

Course Assessments that Require Supporting Documentation

Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. For this course the following assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation:

ASSESSMENT NAME: any written assignment

Academic Consideration for Course Components with Flexible Deadlines

This course has 10 quizzes with only 8/10 quizzes counted towards your final grade. Academic consideration will not be granted for missed quizzes. If students miss 2/10 quizzes, the remaining 8 quizzes will be used in the calculation of the final grade. If

students miss greater than 2 quizzes, they will receive a grade of zero on each missed quiz.

This course employs flexible deadlines for assignments. The assignment deadlines can be found above in the course outline. For each assignment, students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 72 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of XX% per day will be subtracted from the assessed grade. As flexible deadlines are used in this course, requests for academic consideration will not be granted. If you have a long-term academic consideration or an accommodation for disability that allows greater flexibility than provided here, please reach out to your instructor at least one week prior to the posted deadline.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Special Examinations

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found here.

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://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?PolicyCategoryID=1&Command=showCategory&Keywords=scholastic&SubHeadingID=189&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_189

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.

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

Medical Policy, Late Assignments, etc.

Students registered in Social Science should refer to:

<http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/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

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 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

