Political Communication                           Lewis-Clark State College                                                    Spring 2014

Lewis-Clark State College                           - Spring Term 2014 –
POLLS/COMM 370 Political Communication

General Course & Contact Information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor: Leif Hoffmann</th>
<th>Office: SPH 304</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Dates: M &amp; W 9:00am – 10:15am</td>
<td>Advising Hours: M &amp; W 10:30am – 11:30am &amp; Tuesday 3pm to 4pm or by appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom: Activity Center West, Room 133</td>
<td>Phone: 208-792-2818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRN: 47486 &amp; 47487</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:lshoffmann@lcsc.edu">lshoffmann@lcsc.edu</a></td>
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</table>

Course Description and Objectives:

“The public have an insatiable curiosity to know everything. Except what is worth knowing. Journalism, conscious of this, and having tradesman-like habits, supplies their demands.”

Oscar Wilde, 1891, in The Soul of Man under Socialism

This course examines political effects of the mass media in American politics. We will take a closer look at the role of print and electronic media in American Politics and their relationship to the public, politicians, and ultimately, public policy. In doing so, we will assess the media’s impact on government, policy making, election campaigning, and the prospects for democratic deliberation. Special attention will be paid to the theories of media influence, the historic changes of American journalism, the ownership structure of the media and the covering of foreign and military news.

The overall goal is to prepare students to be informed and critical consumers of political messages and the news media.

Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to engage questions such as:

- What is meant by the watchdog role of the press? Does it work well or not?
- How does the mode of transmission shape the political message?
- Can the media shape opinions and affect outcomes?
- What is the minimal effects model?
- What is the hypodermic model?
- Is the media biased? Is the media liberal? Does bias matter?
- How does ownership matter? Does it affect the portrayal of news?
What are the occupational norms and work routines of journalism? How do they affect the coverage of news?

What is the relationship between politicians and the media? Are the presidency and the Congress covered similarly? Do the president and the Congress use the media similarly to communicate with the public?

What is “video rigidity” and how does this influence politics?

What is the relevance of “chilling effects” and self-censoring?

What methods are commonly used to analyze media effects?

How do war and foreign events get covered? How has it changed over time?

How can balanced reporting actually undermine accurate reporting?

What’s access journalism?

How has journalism changed from the 19th to the 20th century?

What is meant by priming, revolving door and episodic versus thematic framing?

What is the future of media politics? How can we improve the quality of public communication?

By the end of the course students should have also started to build skills in the following areas:

- Conduct social science research
- Think analytically about social and political phenomena
- Understand and apply social scientific theories, concepts and categories
- Read and analyze works dealing with social science issues
- Write a clear, concise, and organized paper
- Demonstrate a knowledge of major periods and trends in American politics

Required Texts:


One copy of each of these three required books will also be on hand for a 2 to 4-hour loan period at the library’s course reserve.

All other readings will be made available on Blackboard.

To stay abreast of recent events in the United States and beyond and to apply your knowledge gained in class, the daily reading of major privately and state-owned national American and international news sources, such as *The New York Times, USA Today, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, BBC, France24, Xinhua News Agency, Russia Today* and regional news sources, such as *The Lewiston Tribune* and *The Idaho Statesman*, is HIGHLY recommended and encouraged.
A non-exhaustive list of some major news sources with internet links can be found at the end of the syllabus. In any case, make **ABSOLUTELY** sure to follow the news in one way or another (newspapers, TV or internet). Ignorance is not always bliss.

**Expectations & Requirements:**

**Written Assignment:** Each student will be required to write two publishable op-ed style essays during the course of the term and upload them to Blackboard. Each essay should not exceed two pages in length. An additional reference page is required. Papers should be double-spaced with margins of 1 inch to each side. To write a good essay, you will need to spend some time in the library researching your topic and to use citations properly where appropriate. It is pretty **difficult** to make an argument concisely in taking into account not only what **you** think but also what **other people** think. In short, be sure to state what you think – your ideas should be part of your essay – while also making sure that you are clear about the ideas of others. An **explicit discussion of the ideas of other people should be at the center of your essay.**

For each essay a list of approved topics will be handed out in class.

You will have to cite at least three academic sources for **each** essay, i.e. articles out of academic journals or academic books, as well as three news sources, such as articles, op-eds, editorials, etc. **NO LATE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED!** Deadlines are an **IMPORTANT** part of the news business.

**Commenting on op-eds:** You are required to comment on **at least** two of the first op-eds posted by your colleagues on Blackboard within the week following their on-line submission. This not only gives you an opportunity to build an epistemic community among yourselves, but usually you will learn a lot about the shortcomings and strengths of your own op-eds by providing feedback to others. **Please make sure when making suggestions for improvements or providing criticism regarding arguments that your comments are constructive and realistic.** However, feel free to write your comments in the style of a letter to the editor.

**Self-reflection page:** When submitting your second op-ed, you also have to submit a SEPARATE one to three page self-reflection paper. This paper needs to state briefly what you have learned from the feedback received from your fellow students and instructor on your first op-ed as well as more generally from engaging media issues throughout the term and your writing projects.

**Naming of Files** Be very clear and specific when saving and posting a file, especially when communicating with others via email, such as sending drafts for comments. Many students tend to name their files only "Essay.doc" or "Topic2.doc". Of course, this is very confusing for the recipient of your document (be it a fellow student, an instructor or future employer). Try to develop a consistent and clear system over time. This will help you to remember what the file is about months and years down the road and make communication with others easier. **Make certain that your file name includes your last name, year, title of your document and course number/name and the type of assignment:**


Additional information regarding the written assignment will be provided in the first class session.
Midterm and Final: These exams are meant to test your knowledge of the material presented during this course. They are comprehensive and cumulative, i.e. the exams will draw on the entirety of the lectures, readings and other materials presented in the class. Details on the format of the exams will be announced in class. Please keep in mind that any information from the readings is fair game for exams and quizzes, whether or not it is explicitly covered in class. Also note that the lectures will sometimes introduce material not covered in the textbook, so good note taking is key to your success in class.

General advice: The use of Wikipedia or a related site is unacceptable beyond employing it as a starting point similar to an encyclopedia. It is a bad idea to cite Wikipedia in any of your courses. Additionally, don’t cite lecture notes as sources. Make sure to proofread! Spell checks can and do fail. If there are significant spelling and grammatical mistakes throughout an assignment, you will be graded down. A good paper is a well-written paper which avoids grammatical errors and spelling mistakes.

Give 24 hours advance notice or formal doctor’s letter for excused absence or assignment extension. No other extensions or absences will be excused. Late assignments lose a half letter grade each day. First half-grade is deducted on day of deadline for assignments turned in after class.

Check your email every day. This is not optional at a modern university. I will often send you information on scheduling, corrections to lectures, and other messages that you need to see. It is your responsibility to check your LCMail account. Further, by college policy, I will only respond to email that you send to me from your LCMail account. Once I have sent you a message, I assume that you have that information.

Do not hesitate to contact me for assistance with assignments or for other questions. I am there to help you to succeed and make the best out of your learning experience. In short, come see and talk to me during office hours or send me an email. Be active in class, ask questions, and share your concerns. Chances are if you are confused about an issue, there are other students in the class that share your confusion. Last but not least, find a study partner. This will pay off in the long run. You can study together, share notes, and help each other with the assignments, e.g. help each other proofread or constructively critique the structure and information provided in your assignments.

To stay informed about LCSC Social Sciences activities beyond the regular classroom consider to “like” us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/LCSCSocScienceDiv.

Disability accommodations: Students with learning disabilities will be accommodated in accordance with university guidelines. Please speak with me during the first two weeks of class and consult the LCSC Student Counseling Center immediately (Reid Centennial Hall, Room 111; phone: 208-792-2211).

Moreover, if you are having difficulty writing or just want to improve your paper, you might want to take advantage of the services offered by the LCSC Writing Center, Library, Room 172 (http://www.lcsc.edu/writing-center).

Classroom Etiquette:

Students are expected to conduct themselves professionally as adults. You are expected to be in class on time. If due to unforeseen circumstances, you arrive late or need to leave early, please
do so with the least amount of interruption for the class, e.g. take the first seat available / sit close to the door. The central premise regarding classroom etiquette is to respect others by practicing simple manners.

**Cell phones**: Please remember to turn off your cell phone before class and exams. If your cell phone rings in class it is not the end of the world, just try to turn it off as soon as possible. If you need to take an important call, please leave the room. **DO NOT text, check Facebook or listen to music with headphones during class**. When doing so you are obviously not participating in the class or contributing to the learning environment. Most importantly, however, you are doing yourself a disservice by dividing your attention and giving your colleagues and the instructor the impression that you are rude.

**Laptops**: Feel free to bring your laptops to class for taking notes. However, out of courtesy, please refrain from playing on-line games, surfing the net non-stop or sending emails to the instructor during lecture. In doing so, you might easily distract your fellow students sitting beside or behind you and portray yourself as unprofessional.

Please treat the other students in the course with the utmost respect. If you are participating in a debate, please criticize your opponent’s arguments rather than the opponent’s identity. If you come to class late or need to leave early, please do so in a quiet manner so as not to disrupt the classroom environment. If you need to say something to your neighbor, whisper it or write a note – those sitting nearby will thank you for your courtesy.

**Grading Procedures:**

Please **be aware that minimum requirements are as the term indicates MINIMUM requirements** to not fail an assignment. In short, do NOT expect to receive an outstanding grade for simply having done the minimum. There is no curve in this course. All assignment and exam grades throughout the term and the overall course grade will be calculated on a 100 point scale and calibrated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>100 - 92.50</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>89.50 – 92.49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.50 – 89.49</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>82.50 – 87.49</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.50 – 79.49</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>72.50 – 77.49</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67.50 – 69.49</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>59.50 – 67.49</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>When Due</td>
<td>% of Course Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Varies; being quiet can’t hurt you, but strong participation can bump up your grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op-Ed Style Essay 1</td>
<td>March 5 at 11:59pm the latest</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op-Ed Style Essay 2</td>
<td>April 30 at 11:59pm the latest</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on Op-Eds</td>
<td>March 12 at 11:59pm the latest</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflection Pages</td>
<td>April 30 at 11:59pm the latest</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>Wednesday, May 14, 2014 at 9am</td>
<td>25%</td>
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To avoid any confusion, please note once more that the overall course grade is weighted. Thus, as shown above, each assignment contributes differently to your course grade. You can also calculate your own grade by using the following formula: Course Grade = .20 (x) + .20 (x) + .10 (x) + .10(x) + .15 (x) +25 (x).

Regrading of assignments: You may request the regrading of materials that have been graded by the instructor. Any request has to be made in writing by providing a brief explanation of why you wish to have the assignment regraded.

Incompletes: Incompletes will only be granted in exceptional emergency situations (such as death in the immediate family or serious illness – family visits, weddings, etc., do not count), when the relevant assignment(s) cannot be completed in time. In all other cases the grade will be based upon the work completed by the end of the semester, which may result in a failing grade. The grade “I” for an incomplete may be assigned only after instructor and student have completed and signed a Contract for Grade of Incomplete which makes arrangements for the unfinished work to be completed.

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, Fabrication, Cheating, and Misconduct:

Any form of plagiarism or cheating will not be tolerated. When you hand in an assignment, make sure that everything in it is your own work and that you have made the appropriate references where necessary. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes plagiarism. Neither ignorance nor the lack of an intention to cheat or plagiarize will be considered a legitimate defense. Violations will be punished to the full extent possible, including flunking of the course and a referral to the Dean of Student Services. Raise any questions and concerns you have with the instructor before problems arise. To learn more about LCSC’s Policy on Academic Dishonesty, read it at [http://www.lcsc.edu/student-affairs/student-code-of-conduct/](http://www.lcsc.edu/student-affairs/student-code-of-conduct/).

Course Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Assignment for Class</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>January 20</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Day - NO CLASS</td>
<td>No reading required</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>Theories of Media Influence: Is the media biased? (cont.)</td>
<td>Catch up with reading or read ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>February 17</td>
<td>President’s Day – NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>Film: <em>The Mean World Syndrome</em> (2010) by Earp and Morris,</td>
<td>Catch up with reading or read ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 26</td>
<td>Politicians &amp; the Media: The Presidency (cont.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 8</strong></td>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>MIDTERM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 9</strong></td>
<td>March 17</td>
<td>Media and the Law (cont.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 10</strong></td>
<td>March 24</td>
<td>Inside the Profession (cont.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 26</td>
<td>Inside the Profession (cont.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Week 11

March 31 – April 4 SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

# Week 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>Political Economy of News (continued)</td>
<td>Catch up with reading or read ahead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Week 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 9</td>
<td><strong>Guest Speaker:</strong> Bill Hall - Former Lewiston Tribune Editor &amp; press secretary to Idaho Sen. Frank Church during his campaign for president</td>
<td>Catch up with reading or read ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16</td>
<td><strong>Guest Speaker:</strong> Reporters at War: War, Lies and Videotape (2003/2004)</td>
<td>Catch up with reading or read ahead</td>
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# Week 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>Media &amp; the Military (cont.)</td>
<td>Catch up with reading or read ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23</td>
<td><strong>Guest Speaker:</strong> Larry Haapanen – Former Information Officer in the US Air Force and LCSC professor</td>
<td>Catch up with reading or read ahead</td>
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### Week 15

**April 28**  
**Covering Foreign Affairs**  

**April 30**  
**Covering Foreign Affairs**  
Catch up with reading or read ahead

### Week 16

**May 5**  
**The Future of Media Politics**  

**May 7**  
**The Future of Media Politics (continued)**  

### Week 17

**May 14**  
(Wednesday)  
9am  
**FINAL**  
No reading required
Recommended Readings:


Recommended Movies:


Noujaim, Jehane (Director). 2004. *Control room [videorecording]*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Lions Gate Home Entertainment.


**Useful Websites:**

- Accuracy in the Media – Conservative leaning organization
  - [http://www.aim.org](http://www.aim.org)

- Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting – Liberal leaning organization

- Agence France-Presse – French wire service

- Annenberg Political Fact Check (project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania) – non-partisan
  - [http://www.factcheck.org/](http://www.factcheck.org/)

- Associated Press – American wire service

- BBC (UK):
  - [http://news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk)

- BBC (UK) Action Network
  - [http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork](http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork)

- C-Span (Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network) – Watch the House and Senate on-line

- Federal Communications Commission

- Freedom of Information Center – run by the University of Missouri
Free Republic - Conservative oriented news forum

Website containing a library of presidential campaign ads from 1952 – 2004

Gallup Poll

ITAR-TASS – Russian news wire

Website containing a library of presidential campaign ads from 1952 – 2004

Nielsen Media Research

MoveOn.org – Liberal oriented news forum

Media Channel – site tracks media ownership and other issues connected with the media

Columbia School of Journalism - CJR’s guide to what the major media companies own.

Parents TV Council

Reuters – British wire service

Start and Stripes – (quasi-independent) Newspaper of the armed forces

THOMAS – Website by the Library of Congress tracking legislation

USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review

US Department of Defense’s official website

FreePress - national, nonpartisan organization working to reform the media

Center for Communication and Civic Engagement at the University of Washington:

Additional websites will be introduced throughout the term.
Syllabus Addendum

Consumer Information  In 2008, the federal government required all post-secondary institutions offering federal financial aid programs to provide key data to both prospective and current students. To comply with this requirement, Lewis-Clark State College has developed a consumer information page, which may be accessed at http://www.lcsc.edu/studentconsumerinformation

Disability Accommodations  Students requiring special accommodations or course adaptations due to a disability and/or a health-related issue should consult their course instructors and the LCSC Student Counseling Center immediately (RCH 111, 792-2211). Official documentation may be required in order to provide an accommodation and/or adaptation.

Student Rights and Responsibilities  Students have the responsibility for knowing their program requirements, course requirements, and other information associated with their enrollment at LCSC. Students should review the LCSC General Catalog (http://www.lcsc.edu/catalog/) and the LCSC Student Handbook (available at http://www.lcsc.edu/studentservices/contactus.htm) for more information.

Accidents/Student Insurance  Students participating in LCSC classes normally must look to their personal health insurance policy (Student Health Insurance Plan or comparable private coverage) should an accident occur. In the event of an accident, please seek medical help, if necessary, and report the incident to LCSC Security (792-2226). Fieldtrips or other special student activities may also require students to submit a signed participation waiver (forms can be obtained from the supporting Division Office).

Enrollment Verification/Attendance  Students who are not actively pursuing their classes may have to repay part or all of their financial aid awards depending upon the circumstances.

Academic Dishonesty  Academic dishonesty, which includes cheating
and plagiarism, is not tolerated at LCSC. Individual faculty members will impose their own policies and sanctions regarding academic dishonesty. Students who are accused of being academically dishonest may be referred to the VP for Student Affairs for official disciplinary action.

**Illegal File Sharing** Students using LCSC’s computers and/or computer network must comply with the college’s appropriate use policies and are prohibited from illegally downloading or sharing data files of any kind. Specific information about the college’s technology policies and its protocols for combating illegal file sharing may be found on the VP for Student Affairs’ web page (http://www.lcsc.edu/studentservices/).

**Diversity Vision Statement** Regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation, you will be treated and respected as a human being. http://www.lcsc.edu/culturaldiversity/

**Disclosures** During this course, if you elect to discuss information with me which you consider to be sensitive or personal in nature and not to be shared with others, please state this clearly. Your confidentiality in these circumstances will be respected unless upholding that confidentiality could reasonably put you, other students, other members of the campus community, or me in danger. In those cases or when I am bound by law to report what you have told me, such as incidents involving sexual assault or other violent acts, I will submit a report to appropriate campus authorities.

**Updated January 2014**