

POLITICS & ENTERTAINMENT

Communication 431

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Course Description:

For years politics and entertainment have had a flirtatious and tumultuous relationship: From the political comedy of the Smothers Brothers, to the fictional presidential drama of The West Wing, to presidential candidate appearances on late-night comedy programs. In this course, we will consider the theoretical foundations of the link between politics and entertainment. We will explore the psychological aspects of message processing that relate to entertainment media – narrative, transportation, priming, mental models, and more. In addition, we will critically examine the normative implications of political entertainment for citizenship and the healthy functioning of democracy.

Required course material:

- 1. REQUIRED READINGS** are in the form of **PDFs on Canvas**
- 2. REQUIRED COURSEPACK: AVAILABLE AT LIEBERMAN'S BOOKSTORE.**

Grade allocation:

COMM 431	Points
Exam #1	20
Exam #2	20
Discussion questions	5 (1 pt each X 5)
Response papers (2)	20 (10 pts each X 2)
Final Project - Prospectus	4
Final Project - Written	13
Final Project - Presentation	8
Attendance & Participation	10
Total =	100 points
COMM 631	Points

Exam #1	20
Exam #2	20
Response papers (4)	32 (8 pts each X 2)
Final Project - Prospectus	3
Final Paper	15
Attendance & Participation	10
Total =	100 points

Honors section assignments for 431 (20% of final grade)

2 additional response papers (30% each)

1 additional response paper based on book (40%)

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Deadlines are fixed. To help you plan your semester, **dates for exams are included in this syllabus.** If you have a conflict with a date posted in this syllabus, contact me as soon as possible so we can make other arrangements. No extensions will be granted *unless* in the case of medical or family emergency.

Class Expectations: Attendance, Participation & Reading. Attendance AND participation contribute 10% to students' final grades. Students are expected to be present, prepared, and participatory. Students with **university-excused absences** (due to illness, death in the family, or athletic obligations **with proper documentation**) may be eligible for notes from the professor. To aid in note-taking and to help organize the course, skeletal notes outlines will be provided on Canvas.

How attendance affects attendance/participation score (10% of final grade):

Any class absence *without* proper documentation is considered an official class absence and will affect student attendance/participation scores. Students who accumulate more than 2 unexcused absences will receive participation scores below 8/10. More than 3 such absences, below 7/10. More than 4, below 6/10.

NOTE: For class discussion to be a success, all students must read *before* attending class. **In the event that students are not exhibiting careful reading of class material, I reserve the right to assign pop quizzes on the class readings that I will then use to factor into attendance/participation grades.**

Classroom Conduct.

We're going to be talking about some big, heady, interconnected concepts in this class related to cognitive psychology, politics, journalism, and entertainment. That means I need your processing capacity to be dedicated to course content. To that end, this is a **laptop-free classroom experience**. Occasionally, when doing group work, laptops will be permitted to be able to review readings etc. Otherwise, laptops should be away. So, please print out readings ahead of time, or take notes on the readings in a notebook that you can have in class. If you feel you need a laptop to succeed in class, simply contact me and we can make arrangements.

Students should come to class prepared to be attentive to and engaged in class lecture. Please:

1. Complete the reading before the class in which the given chapter(s) or article(s) will be discussed.
2. Bring readings every day (on paper. NOT iphone)
3. Silence all handheld devices.
4. Refrain from texting / social media use during class. (participation grade will be affected)

Academic Honesty. The University of Delaware requires all acts or attempted acts of academic dishonesty be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) plagiarism, cheating, or sabotaging another student's work. *Any student who participates in such activities will be expelled from this course and receive a grade of "F."* For more information, please consult the Student Guide to University Policies <http://www.udel.edu/stuguide/11-12/code.html#honesty>.

Please note, according to the University of Delaware Student Code of Conduct, "By submitting work as his or her own, a student certifies the *originality of all material* not otherwise acknowledged.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- a. The quotation or other use of another person's words, ideas, opinions, thoughts, or theories (even if paraphrased into one's own words) without acknowledgment of the source; or
- b. The quotation or other use of facts, statistics, or other data or materials (including images) that are not clearly common knowledge without acknowledgment of the source."

Communication Faculty Statement on Disclosures of Instances of Sexual Misconduct

If, at any time during this course, I happen to be made aware that a student may have been the victim of sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic/dating violence, or stalking), I am obligated by federal law to inform the university's Title IX office, at which point they will decide if the incident should be examined further. If such a situation is disclosed to me in class, in a paper assignment, or in office hours, I can promise to protect your *privacy* (meaning, I will not disclose the incident to other people in my department or across the university), but I cannot promise *confidentiality* (meaning, I am required to report the incident to the university's Title IX Coordinator).

In the event that you, or someone you know, has experienced sexual misconduct that you would like to discuss with a trained individual in a *confidential* setting, please go to the website of the University's Office of Equity and Inclusion. Here, you will find resources to help you. You are not alone, and this is not your fault. There are members of the University community that you can speak to *confidentially*, including licensed counselors and members of the clergy. These individuals can be found at the Center for Counseling & Student Development, as well as certain licensed counselors in Student Wellness & Promotion and within pastoral care.

- At UD, we provide 24 hour crisis assistance and victim advocacy and counseling. For information on the various places you can turn for help: <http://www.udel.edu/gbv/Printer-friendly%20Resource%20List%20for%20GBV.pdf>
- For more information on Gender-based Violence: <http://www.udel.edu/gbv/index.html>
- For more information on the university's policies on sexual misconduct and your possible courses of action, please see: <http://www.udel.edu/oei/knowledge-awareness/IXIncidentForm.pdf>

Grading. Letter grades are calculated as follows, and are rounded at the hundredth place (so, .45 and up gets rounded up while .44 and below gets rounded down):

93% = A	73% = C
90% = A-	70% = C-
87% = B+	67% = D+
83% = B	63% = D
80% = B-	60% = D-
77% = C+	59% or less = F

Professor Young's policy on "grade negotiation." Outside of clerical errors or incorrectly marked scores (which I will change), I do not engage in case by case grade negotiation to "change" or "bump" scores. Assignments and assessments are graded in a standardized manner, equally across the class, hence any special bump or consideration would need to be applied to all students in the course. Similarly, out of fairness and equitability, there are no individualized extra credit opportunities. In addition, to avoid possible violations of FERPA (*Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*) *I try not to discuss details of course grades over email. Such inquiries should be made in person by scheduling an appointment with me.*

"So, how do earn a good grade?" While I do not respond to requests for individual grade negotiation, I am more than willing to work with students who would like to improve their performance in the course. Students who make the effort to come see me by appointment or during office hours, and *who are willing to do the work* often see large improvements in their course grades. Such improvements are a result of what students come to learn through this process - about *how to read, how to take notes, how to study and how best to prepare at the college level.*

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Assignments - COMM 431

Exams

Dates: March 18 AND May 6

There are TWO exams that will be administered either in class or online and will include multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short essay questions. **Each exam is worth 20% of your final grade.**



Discussion and Response Weeks

Seven weeks of our semester are designated as “Discussion and Response weeks.” During these seven weeks, all students will need to do EITHER a 3 page Response paper OR write 5 discussion questions to turn in at the start of class on Monday of that week. By the end of the semester, students will have to have completed 5 sets of discussion questions and 2 response papers (hence “7” discussion and response weeks).

Discussion questions (5 sets) (1 point per set = 5 points possible by the end of semester)

During each of these seven weeks, students will be responsible for completing the reading AHEAD of time and writing 5 thought provoking questions that they should be prepared to engage with along with their peers in class.

Response papers

431: (2 papers) (10 points per paper = 20 points possible by end of semester)

631: (4 papers) (8 points per paper = 32 points possible by end of semester)

During each of these seven weeks during the semester, students will have the opportunity to write response papers. Each student will write TWO such papers through the semester. Papers are 12 point font double-spaced, **2-3 pages MAXIMUM.**

Response papers should include:

- The theory (or theories) in which the study is rooted
- The main question or hypothesis tested (in your own words)
- How they tested their hypotheses/RQs
- The BIG findings
- Overall conclusion
- AND (important) A *thoughtful critique* of the study:
 - Illustrate your knowledge of methods and theory by critiquing the methods, the measures, the conclusions the authors draw (can they draw such conclusions based on these data)?
 - Are there aspects of the study you find problematic and/or particularly strong?
- NOTE: PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE UNIVERSITY’S DEFINITION OF PLAIGAIRISM DESCRIBED ON PAGE 2 of THIS SYLLABUS.

Final Project (20%)

Prospectus for final project (5%)

Total = 25% of final grade. Paper due Wed May 22th via email.

Students will work in groups to complete a final project on the topic of their choice. Students choose a genre or form of politically relevant entertainment programming and complete a literature review on the history, evolution, and potential impact of said programming. The project must have a point of view regarding the implications of the chosen programming. Is it harmful? Beneficial? Both? Might it depend on who is watching? Results will be written up in a 13-15 page paper (15% of final grade) and will be presented to class during the last two weeks of the semester (10%). Students are encouraged to consider unique and creative ways to engage the audience (our class) in the content of the presentation.



Each group will submit a **2 page project prospectus due Wed March 27**



All direct quotes must be put in quotation marks and attributed to the study source with a page number (AUTHOR, YEAR, p. XXX). All references to outside materials must be noted with (AUTHOR, YEAR).




Important Dates for Spring Semester 2019

Mon, 2/11:	Our class starts
Mon, 2/22:	End of free drop/add
Mon, 3/18:	Exam 1
Wed, 3/27:	Final project prospectus due
April 1 - 5:	<i>Spring Break</i>
Mon, 5/6:	Exam 2
Mon, May 20:	Last day of our class
Wed, May 22:	Final papers due via email

**Course Schedule
(Subject to Change)**

Week	Dates	Readings
1	Feb 11, 13, 15	Background: Politics as a Social Construction and the State of Journalism today
		PDF on CANVAS: Murray Edelman, <i>Constructing the Political Spectacle</i> , Chapter 1
		PDF on CANVAS: Young, <i>Irony and Outrage</i> , Chapter 2 & 3
2	Feb 18, 20, 22	The d(evolution) of journalism
		PDF on CANVAS: Edelman Chapter 7
		PDF on CANVAS: Hart, R. (1996). Easy citizenship: Television's curious legacy. <i>American Academy of political and social science</i>
3	Feb 25, 27, Mar 1	Cognitive processing and importance of stories: ELM, Persuasion, and Narratives
	Chance #1 	PDF on CANVAS: Shen, L. (2010). Mitigating Psychological Reactance: The Role of Message- Induced Empathy in Persuasion. <i>Human Communication Research</i> , 36, 397 – 422.
		PDF on CANVAS: Igartua, J. J., & Barrios, I. (2012). Changing real-world beliefs with controversial movies: Processes and mechanisms of narrative persuasion. <i>Journal of Communication</i> , 62(3), 514-531.
4	Mar 4, 6, 8	Making meaning through entertainment
	Chance #2 	PDF on CANVAS: Bartsch, A., & Schneider, F. M. (2014). Entertainment and politics revisited: How non-escapist forms of entertainment can stimulate political interest and information seeking. <i>Journal of Communication</i> , 64(3), 369-396.
		PDF on CANVAS: LaMarre, H. L., & Landreville, K. D. (2009). When is fiction as good as fact? Comparing the influence of documentary and historical reenactment films on engagement, affect, issue interest, and learning. <i>Mass Communication and Society</i> , 12(4), 537-555.

Week	Dates	Readings
5	March 11, 13, 15	Priming, Mental Models, & the Construction of Political Understanding
	Chance #3  Survey for Final project topics	<p>PDF on CANVAS: Holbert, R. L., Pillion, W., Tschida, D. A., Armfield, G. G., Kinder, K., Cherry, D. L., et.al. (2003). The West Wing as endorsement of the U. S. Presidency: Expanding the bounds of priming in political communication. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 53, 427-447.</p> <p>Screening: <i>The West Wing:</i> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O94qAeJ64X8&feature=share&list=PL242A7FFD3B18EDD6</p>
		<p>PDF on CANVAS: Holbrook, R. A., & Hill, T. G. (2005). Agenda-setting and priming in prime time television: Crime dramas as political cues. <i>Political Communication</i>, 22(3), 277-295.</p>
		<p>Washington Post article on (Jones and Paris) effects of dystopian fiction on support for political violence: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2019/01/11/dystopian-fiction-makes-people-more-willing-to-justify-political-violence/?utm_term=.3a0f53287a1b</p>
6	March 18, 20, 22	Exam and catching up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EXAM 1 MON March 18 • CREATE FINAL PROJECT GROUPS and HOLD FIRST WORK SESSION • CATCHING UP 		
7	March 25, 27, 29	Mental Models & the Construction of Issues and Groups
	Chance #4 	<p>PDF on CANVAS: Mastro, D., Behm-Morawitz, E., & Ortiz, M. (2007). The cultivation of social perceptions of Latinos: A mental models approach. <i>Media Psychology</i>, 9, 1-19.</p>
	group project prospectus due Wed March 27	<p>PDF on CANVAS: Ramasubramanian, S. (2011). The impact of stereotypical versus counterstereotypical media exemplars on racial attitudes, causal attributions, and support for affirmative action. <i>Communication Research</i>, 38(4), 497-516.</p>
		<p>Listen: http://www.npr.org/2014/08/05/337779030/from-good-times-to-honey-boo-boo-who-is-poor-on-tv</p>
April 1 – 5: SPRING BREAK		

8	April 8, 10, 12	The Psychology of Political Satire
	Chance #5 	Young: <i>Irony & Outrage</i> , Ch. 4
	Due WED 4/10	PDF on CANVAS: Young, DG (2008) The Privileged role of the late-night joke, <i>Media Psychology</i> .
Week	Dates	Readings
9	April 15, 17, 19	TOPIC: Political Satire: The dangers of irony
	Chance #6 	Young: <i>Irony & Outrage</i> , Chapter 5
		PDF on CANVAS: Vidmar, N., & Rokeach, M. (1974). Archie Bunker's bigotry: A study in selective perception and exposure. <i>Journal of Communication</i> , 24(1), 36-47.
		PDF on CANVAS: LaMarre, H. L., Landreville, K. D., & Beam, M. A. (2009). The irony of satire: Political ideology and the motivation to see what you want to see in The Colbert Report. <i>International Journal of Press/Politics</i> , 14, 212–231.
10	April 22, 24, 26	TOPIC: Political Satire: appeal and effects
	Chance #7 	PDF on CANVAS: Peifer, J. T. (2017). Imitation as flattery: How TV news parody's media criticism can influence perceived news media importance and media trust. <i>Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly</i> , 1077699017713002.
		PDF on CANVAS: Feldman, L. (2013). Learning about Politics From the Daily Show: The Role of Viewer Orientation and Processing Motivations, <i>Mass Communication and Society</i> , 16, 586 - 607.
	Friday group work session	
11	April 29, May 1 & 3	TOPIC: Why is satire so liberal
		Young: <i>Irony & Outrage</i> , Chapters 7 - 10
	Friday group work session	
12	May 6, 8, and 10	Group Work and Final Presentations Start

EXAM 2 MONDAY May 6		
14	May 13, 15, 17	Final Presentations
15	May 20	Last Class Wrap Up!