MCM 535
Media & Politics

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Office: Boynton 301b

Department: Mass Communication
Office Hours: Online office hours

Class meeting time and place: Online

Course Description: Explores the role of both social media and traditional media in modern political campaigns with an emphasis on the role of advertising and public relations campaign strategies and news and technology.

Program Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate a comprehension of theories central to the mass communication discipline.
2. Students will understand, design, and conduct research in mass communication.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of legal and ethical principles that guide media industry decisions.
4. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the historical context and societal implications of the media industry.
5. Students will demonstrate a comprehension of evolving trends in the media industry and learn to think critically about the media’s role in a global market.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will interpret how politicians utilize traditional mass media and social media technologies in political campaigns by strategically communicating with the electorate.
2. Students will identify the role of advertising and public relations campaigns utilizing traditional media and new media technologies.
3. Students will demonstrate a proficiency in effective and ineffective strategic communication in advertising and public relations.

General Education Core Curriculum Objectives/Outcomes: n/a

Required Text and Materials:


APA style guidelines can be found at several places on the web: One good site which offers several links is: APA Styleguide or APA Styleguide.

(Additional research articles will be assigned for reading throughout semester)

**Credit Hour Justification/Course Calendar:**
MCOM 535 (TCCN MCM 5335) "Media and Politics" (3 credits; fully online), spans 15 weeks, requiring students to engage the online modules for at least three hours per week, and covers topics on the ways in which media impacts politics broadly, as well as media’s influence on the current political landscape. The course consists of multiple weekly readings on these different media theories, along with accompanying reaction papers, tests, APA-style papers, and/or application projects depending on the course material. For every hour a student spends engaging with the content, he/she spends at least two hours completing associated assignments and assessments.

**Media Monitoring:**

Students in this course are expected to keep up with current events and to pay close attention to media coverage of politics. It is recommended that you monitor some combination of national newspapers (e.g., *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*), broadcast media (e.g., network television news, cable news, news radio), and political news web sites (e.g., *Politico*, *Real Clear Politics*, *The Atlantic*). NOTE: You can gain access to the *New York Times* by accessing it through the SFA library. Once you have created an account, you can even place the NYT app on your smartphones (you'll find the instructions on the library homepage).

**Attendance Policy:**

This is an online course and it is your responsibility to stay abreast of all materials in Brightspace. Regular login to the class is a requirement. You must remain aware of all deadlines for assignments, discussion forums, reading quizzes, etc. If you miss an assignment, you can only make it up with an excused absence. **Important:** If you cannot document your illness (e.g., a doctor’s note), emergency, excused absence (e.g., school sponsored event), etc., you cannot make up any missed assignment and/or work. You will lose points for that missed assignment. The policy can be found here.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

To ensure academic integrity, students understand that all required assignments are subject to submission to turnitin.com to verify that it is the student’s original work.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized
materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class: (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at [SFA Definition of Academic Dishonesty](#)

**Acceptable Student Behavior**

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the [Student Conduct Code, policy 10.4](#)). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy:** Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within on calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Students with Disabilities:** To obtain disability accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aides, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [SFA Disability Services](#). The policy can be found [here](#).

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

*Class Participation/Discussion:*

Participation is an essential part of this class. All students are expected to participate in the class discussions in Brightspace. Remember, a portion of your grade comes from robust and intellectual participation in these class discussions. These are not “free” points distributed to students just for posting something. They must be earned via the student’s contribution to a productive, inclusive and respectful educational environment for the professor and fellow students throughout the entire semester. The only way to achieve this assessment is to read all assignments prior to posting to the
discussion! In fact, you will not be able to read the discussion board until you have posted your own assignment.

Each discussion board post should be critical responses to questions or situations based on the topics being discussed for specific reading material. Students should be thorough and demonstrate an understanding of the material lending itself to application and synthesis.

Quizzes:

There will be a quiz that must be completed after each Unit. The quizzes will consist of multiple choice questions. Questions may cover any of the material discussed in class in the power point slides, videos, and the reading.

Political Advertising Paper:

This paper will be a 5-7 page project (excluding title page and references, etc.) examining a key aspect of media and politics – political advertising. The paper will require you to (1) discuss the importance of political advertising and notable milestone ads, (2) analyze ads from two candidates/campaigns in the 2016 or 2018 elections, (3) consider how the news media covered those same ads. This paper will require you to analyze and compare multiple ads and media sources and draw larger conclusions about the implications of the political advertising.

Political Website Paper:

This paper will be a 4-6 page project (excluding title page and references, etc.) examining the websites of two media watchdog organizations, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting and the Media Research Center. Discuss two or three news reports that the organizations criticize. Is this criticism fair? Why or why not? Do you have any criticisms of the watchdog groups?

**NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER DUE DATE** unless discussed at least 24 hours prior to class. Extra credit assignments may be given at the instructor’s pleasure. Extra credit opportunities cannot be made-up, if missed. But, you may submit assignments earlier than the deadlines. Once you have submitted an assignment (even if you submitted it earlier than the deadline), you cannot redo the assignment. Assignments submitted earlier than the deadline will not be graded earlier than the deadline.

GRADING:

Grades will be determined on a standard percentage basis. The exact breakdown is as follows:

- Class Participation/Discussion 25%
- Unit Reading Quizzes 15%
- Political Advertising Paper 30%
- Political Website Paper 30%
Grading Policy:

100 – 90 = A
89-80 = B
79-70 = C
69-60 = D
59 and below = F

**EVALUATION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**A = Excellent**

This work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights, and well-reasoned commentary and analysis. Includes skillful use of source materials, illuminating examples and illustrations, and fluent verbal/written expression. “A” work is coherent, thorough, and shows some creative flair. An “A” signifies mastery.

**B = Good**

Most work tends to fall in this category. This work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of course material, presenting a reasonable degree of insight and a broad level of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source material, along with examples and illustrations, are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear. “B” work is reasonable, clear, appropriate, and complete. A “B” signifies full proficiency.

**C = Adequate/Fair**

This work demonstrates understanding that covers most of the basics but which remains incomplete, superficial, or expresses some important errors or weaknesses. Source material may be used inadequately or somewhat inappropriately. The work may lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations, and articulation/writing may be vague or somewhat hard to follow. A “C” signifies basic proficiency.

**D = Unsatisfactory**

This work may be “in the ballpark,” so to speak, but it demonstrates a serious lack of understanding, and fails to demonstrate many rudimentary elements of the course assignment. Sources may be used inappropriately or not at all. The work may be inarticulate or extremely difficult to read. A “D” signifies conscientious lack of proficiency.

**F = Failed**

Work is somehow worse than a D. An “F” signifies extreme lack of proficiency and/or flagrant disregard for the course material and the standards of the assignment. Please note that
assignments not completed will receive a zero (0), which is considerably lower than an F in terms of percentage.

Plus (+) or minus (-) grades indicate your range within the aforementioned grades. In other words, B+ means very good.
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<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Units (also called Modules)</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 1—3</td>
<td>1/13—2/2, 2020</td>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>• Read Syllabus, Order &quot;Media Politics&quot; Required Textbook, Order APA Required Textbook, SFA Steen Library, Meet Your Instructor, and Discussion Board Netiquette.</td>
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<td>• Please Introduce Yourself to your fellow classmates.</td>
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<td>• Read Unit One course content.</td>
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<td>• Read chapters 1, 2, and 3 in your textbook.</td>
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<td>• Submit the essay for Unit 1 Discussion (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Friday, January 31.</td>
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<td>• Submit the essay response for Unit 1 Discussion (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Sunday, February 2.</td>
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<td>• Take Reading Quiz (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Monday, February 3.</td>
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<td>Weeks 4—6</td>
<td>2/3—2/21, 2020</td>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>• Read Unit 2 course content.</td>
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<td>• Read chapters 4, 5, and 6 in the Iyengar textbook.</td>
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<td>• Submit the essay for Unit 2 Discussion (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Friday, February 21.</td>
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<td>• Submit the essay response for Unit 2 Discussion (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Sunday, February 23.</td>
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<td>• Take Reading Quiz (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Monday, February 24.</td>
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<td>• Start researching and writing Political Website Paper. See Weeks 7—8.</td>
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<td>Week 7—8</td>
<td>3/2—3/22, 2020</td>
<td>Units 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Submit <em>Political Website Paper</em> by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Friday, March 6.</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>3/7—3/15, 2020</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>There is no online class activity on these days unless you need to use this time to catch up on any readings, get work done toward the upcoming assignments, or get caught up on assignments in your other classes. Use this week at your discretion and use it wisely.</td>
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| Weeks 10—12   | 3/16—4/5, 2020 | Unit 3     | • Read Unit 3 course content.  
• Read chapters 7, 8, and 9 in the Iyengar textbook.  
• Submit the *essay* for *Unit 3 Discussion (Chapters 7, 8, and 9)* by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Friday, April 3.  
• Submit the *essay response* for *Unit 3 Discussion (Chapters 7, 8, and 9)* by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Sunday, April 5.  
• Take *Reading Quiz (Chapters 7, 8, and 9)* by 11:59 p.m. (CST), *Monday, April 6*.  
• Start researching and writing *Political Advertising Paper*. See Weeks 12—14. |
| Weeks 13—14   | 4/6—4/19, 2020 | Unit 4     | • Read Module 4 course content.  
• Read chapter 10 in the Iyengar textbook.  
• Submit the *essay* for *Unit 4 Discussion (Chapter 10)* by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Friday, April 17.  
• Submit the *essay response* for *Unit 4 Discussion (Chapter 10)* by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Sunday, April 19.  
• Submit *Political Advertising Paper* by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Monday, May 4. |
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<th>Weeks 15—16</th>
<th>4/20—5/1, 2020</th>
<th>Unit 4 (cont)</th>
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<td>• Submit <strong>Political Advertising Paper</strong> by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Monday, May 4.</td>
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<td>• Take Reading Quiz (Chapters 10 and 11) by 11:59 p.m. (CST), Tuesday, May 5.</td>
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