Course Title: Survey of Political Communication

Course Number: COMM 5383-102

Course Description:
This course examines some of the tensions between the requirements of democracy and the forms of communication that have emerged to meet them, exploring the roles of political leaders, citizens, and the mass media in the evolution of a democratic political information system. Do we have the government we deserve? Could the media do a better job of informing citizens about public affairs? What are the obligations of average people in a democratic society to become informed about community life? And if the government, media, and citizens could and should do better, why don’t they? These questions are not merely academic; we rely on this information system to keep our democracy viable. Understanding how it works gives students knowledge they need to become better citizens.

Class Dates, Location and Hours:
Dates: January 22-27, 2013
Hours: Mon-Fri 6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.; Sat 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sun 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Last day to enroll or drop without penalty: December 24, 2012

Site Director:
Phone: 703-418-4800; Fax: 703-418-2730; E-mail: apwashington@ou.edu

Professor Contact Information:
Course Professor: Patrick C. Meirick, Ph.D.
Mailing Address: Department of Communication
Burton Hall, Room 101
610 Elm Avenue
University of Oklahoma
Norman, OK  73019
Telephone Number: (405) 325-1574
Fax Number: (405) 325-7625
E-mail Address: meirick@ou.edu
Professor availability: The professor will be available via e-mail to students before and after the class sessions. On-site office hours are half an hour before and after each class session, by appointment.

Textbook(s) and Instructional Materials:
Student materials are available at the Follett/AP Bookstore located in the Oklahoma Memorial Union, 900 Asp Ave., Norman, OK. Orders can be placed online at www.oklahomaunion.bkstr.com or by telephone at 866-369-9713 (toll free in the U.S.) or 405-325-5960 (outside the U.S.). E-mail orders may be sent to oklahomaunion@bkstr.com. Representatives are available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST on Friday. Summer hours: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. CST. Faxed orders may be placed 24 hours a day to 866-223-5607 (toll free in the U.S.) or 405-325-7140 (outside the U.S.). (Text prices are available online.)


3. Materials posted on the OU Desire to Learn (D2L) system: Access D2L at [http://learn.ou.edu](http://learn.ou.edu); enter your OU NetID (4+4) and password, and select course to access material. Please contact your local Site Director if you require assistance.

Note: The Follett/AP Bookstore is the Advanced Programs contractual textbook provider. Should text changes become necessary after publication of the course syllabus, Advanced Programs will facilitate text returns/refunds only for texts purchased through the Follett/AP Bookstore.

**Course Objectives:**

The main goals of this course are to demonstrate how closely entwined politics and the media are today and to assist students in becoming more informed consumers of political messages in modern media societies.

**Assignments, Grading and Due Dates:**

**Participation:**

All reading should be completed before the first class meeting. A critical element of the learning environment in this class is lively and well-informed discussion. All students are expected to make informed contributions to class discussion.

**Reflection Papers:**

Each student will select two of the five reflection paper assignments posted on Desire2Learn. These short papers (1-2 pages) are designed to help students focus their thinking in preparation for specific seminar topics. They draw upon the assigned readings and are due on the day the relevant seminar is held (topics and due dates are posted on D2L).

**Final Exam:**

The final examination will cover relevant concepts and topics from readings, lectures, and discussion.

**Post-Seminar Assignment:**

Students will write a 10- to 12-page academic essay (APA style) on the process, problems and possibilities of the role of news in the political system, drawing in particular on Bennett’s *News: The Politics of Illusion*. The essay should address the following issues:

- How does the news affect people’s beliefs, opinions and the way they think about politics? How do people use the news? How should they use it, and what accounts for any differences between the ideal and the real?
- How do politicians use the news? What does this say about our leaders? About the state of journalism?
- What are the media’s obligations to a democratic political communication system? What should their relationship to the public be? What should their relationship to political leaders be?
- Does our current system of news work well or poorly? Where does it fail? Where does it succeed? What obstacles (institutional, organizational, attitudinal, economic, etc.) contribute to its failings, and what changes could be made to help this system work better?

This Post-Seminar Paper is 30% of your grade for COMM 5383, Due Date February 17, 2013
Grading: This is a letter-graded course: A, B, C, D, or F.

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>During class sessions</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection Papers</td>
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NOTICE: Failure to meet assignment due dates could result in a grade of I (Incomplete) and may adversely impact Tuition Assistance and/or Financial Aid.
POLICIES AND NOTICES

Attendance/Grade Policy

Attendance and participation in interaction, individual assignments, group exercises, simulations, role playing, etc. are valuable aspects of any course because much of the learning comes from discussions in class with other students. It is expected that you attend all classes and be on time except for excused emergencies.

Excused absences are given for professor mandated activities or legally required activities such as emergencies or military assignments. Unavoidable personal emergencies, including (but not limited to) serious illness; delays in getting to class because of accidents, etc.; deaths and funerals, and hazardous road conditions will be excused.

If you are obtaining financial assistance (TA, STAP, FA, VA, Scholarship, etc.) to pay all or part of your tuition cost, you must follow your funding agency/institution’s policy regarding “I” (Incomplete) grades unless the timeline is longer than what the University policy allows then you must adhere to the University policy.

Students who receive Financial Aid must resolve/complete any “I” (Incomplete) grades by the end of the term or he/she may be placed on “financial aid probation.” If the “I” grade is not resolved/completed by the end of the following term, the student’s Financial Aid may be suspended make the student ineligible for further Financial Aid.

Students are responsible for meeting the guidelines of Tuition Assistance and Veterans Assistance. See the education counselor at your local education center for a complete description of your TA or VA requirements.

Academic Honesty

Honesty is a fundamental precept in all academic activities and … [you] have a special obligation to observe the highest standards of honesty. Academic misconduct in any form is inimical to the purposes and functions of the University and is therefore unacceptable and is rigorously proscribed. Academic misconduct includes:

- cheating (using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise), plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation, and any and all other actions that may improperly affect the evaluation of a student’s academic performance or achievement; assisting others in any such act; or attempting to engage in such acts.

All acts of academic misconduct will be reported and adjudicated as prescribed by the student code of the University of Oklahoma. All students should review the “Student’s Guide to Academic Integrity” found at http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity

Accommodation Statement

The College of Continuing Education [Advanced Programs] is committed to making its activities as accessible as possible. For accommodations on the basis of disability, please contact your OU Site Director.

Course Policies

Advanced Programs policy is to order books in paperback if available. Courses, dates, and professors are subject to change. Please check with your OU Site Director. Students should retain a copy of any assignments that are mailed to the professor for the course. Advanced Programs does not provide duplicating services or office supplies.

Copyright

Any and all course materials, syllabus, lessons, lectures, etc. are the property of professor teaching the course and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and are protected under applicable copyright.

For more information about Advanced Programs, visit our website at: http://www.goou.ou.edu/
INSTRUCTOR VITA

Patrick C. Meirick, Ph.D.

Education

- 2002 Ph.D., Mass Communication, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 1998 M.A., Journalism, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- 1989 B.A., English, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota

Current Positions

- Advanced Programs Professor since 2004
- Associate Professor, Department of Communication, University of Oklahoma

Frequently Taught Advanced Programs Courses

- COMM 5003 Quantitative Research Methods
- COMM 5343 Mass Communication Perspectives
- COMM 5363 Communication and Technology
- COMM 6383 Seminar in Political Communication

Major Areas of Teaching and Research Interest

- Political Communication
- Mass Media Effects
- Persuasion
- Social Cognition

Representative Publications and Presentations


Representative Honors and Awards Received

- Junior Faculty Summer Fellowship, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Oklahoma, 2003, 2005.
• Casey Dissertation Award, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Minnesota, March 2002.
• Graduate School Fellowship, University of Minnesota, 1998.
• Schumack Journalism Fellowship, Marquette University, 1996.

Major Professional Affiliations

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication