Classes: Monday & Wednesday, 17:20-19:00
Instructor: Oana Lup (vislup@ceu.edu)
Office hours: Tuesday 14:00-16:00 and Wednesday 14:00-16:00, Faculty Tower, room 806.
To sign up for consultations please use oanalup.youcanbook.me

Course objectives

This MA-level course provides an overview of the main topics, approaches, and methodologies in the study of political communication. It explores the range of actors involved in political communication and how the information flows between them matter for democratic politics.

We critically examine key concepts such as democratic performance of the media, media logic, mediatization, public sphere, media system characteristics, pluralism, polarization, fragmentation, information quality, political bias, accuracy, media effects, agenda setting, priming, framing, gatekeeping.

For each topic we disentangle the interactions between citizens, mass media, and political actors in the production, transmission, and reception of political messages. We look at how these interactions depend on the characteristics of each of the three, and on contextual, societal and political differences. We will reflect on how these issues travel to the new internet environment and how the changes brought by the internet link up to the fundamental questions of how citizens can make sense of politics and relate to democratic political processes.

The course provides students with a postgraduate-level understanding of:

- selected concepts and research methods in political communication, political marketing, and election campaign studies;
- current techniques used by political and social actors in traditional media as well as online political communication; and
- critical perspectives on and issues in political communication, political marketing, and election campaigns.

Learning outcomes

- A basic understanding and critical review of the social science literature in the field of political communication.
- Conceptual frames and research skills for the analysis of political communication in contemporary political systems.
- Skills to identify and analyze media framing and agenda setting as well as campaign and information effects on public opinion.
Course format
The course will alternate short lectures, students’ presentations, and applied exercises, and will link big theoretical and normative questions with real world examples. Class participation is essential as interactivity and learning from each other are at the core of what should be an enjoyable and not just useful experience. Active participation involves comments and questions based on the required literature, the lecture, and the presentations.

Course requirements and assessment
Attendance is mandatory for this course. If you are unable to attend a class, please inform the instructor in advance via email. More than two unexcused absences results in a reduction of the participation grade and more than three unexcused absences results in failure of the course.

30 % - Presentations
Students need to give two presentations based on the required readings. Clear guidelines for preparing and delivering these presentations will be discussed in the first class of the course.

15% - Class participation and exercises
Individual and group exercises will be assigned for some of the classes. The aim of the exercises is to apply key concepts from readings and cases presented in class to similar examples and real-life problems that students should be able to critically analyze. Detailed instructions for exercises will be given prior to the tasks.
Grading will also take into consideration the active and meaningful participation of students in class discussions.

20% - Mid-term exam, closed-book
The exam will include 1) a few questions that require very brief answers on definitions or basic concepts and 2) one question that refers to more than one concept. For the analytical question the answer is supposed to be a concise, well written essay (you can use examples in the essay that are not only based on the assigned readings). Your answer will have to incorporate a tight argument while evaluating different positions from the scholarly literature.
The exam is a closed book test. Course-related materials, reading notes and the like will not be admitted.

35% Final paper or closed-book final exam
Writing a final paper is particularly recommended for students whose thesis topic is closely connected to the material covered in this class.
An outline of the final paper should be submitted in week 8. The outline follows the structure of a research proposal, in that it should serve to:
- identify the context of the research problem
- present a preliminary account of the literature on the topic, including its gaps and limitations
- identify the research question(s)
- provide (preliminary) examples, cases, data for analysis
- show the intended contribution of the paper to the existing scholarship on the topic
Following consultation with the course instructor on the outline, students can decide whether to submit a final paper or to sit for a closed-book final exam, covering the entire course material.

Length of the paper: 2500 - 3000 words. The final paper is based on the submitted outline and on the feedback received on the outline. Further guidelines for the final paper will be provided in due time. The deadline for the final paper will be agreed upon in class.

**Final exam, closed-book**

The exam will include 1) questions that require very brief answers on definitions or basic concepts and 2) questions that refer to more than one concept. For the analytical questions the answers are supposed to be concise, well written essays (you can use examples in the essays that are not only based on the assigned readings). Your answers will have to incorporate a tight argument while evaluating different positions from the scholarly literature. The exam is a closed book test. Course-related materials, reading notes and the like will not be admitted. The final exam will take place in week 12.
**Recommended readings**


COURSE STRUCTURE AND MANDATORY READINGS

Note:
The mandatory readings may be changed as the course goes along depending on the kind of interests that exist among the students; the order of the topics might also be subject to variations. At all times, students will find the most up-to-date version of the syllabus on the e-learning site.
Recommended readings for specific topics will be provided during the term. They will include scholarly review pieces, classic and state-of-the art scholarly research, theoretically or practically relevant non-academic research, opinion, and discussion pieces as fitting.

WEEK 1: Political Communication. Key issues in a fast changing world


WEEK 2: Media influence. A history lesson with an eye on today


WEEK 3: Framing. Learning


EXERCISE – identify frames

WEEK 4: Message and Messenger. Negativity, advertising, information, mobilization


EXERCISE – debate

WEEK 5 & 6: Media roles and structure. Media Regulation. History and contemporary challenges

WEEK 5


or


EXERCISE
WEEK 6


MID-TERM EXAM

WEEK 7: Biases. Partisanship, Polarization, Misinformation


EXERCISE

WEEK 8: ‘Deliberative systems’ of contemporary democracies: deliberation and everyday political talk. Selective exposure hypothesis.


Or


WEEK 9: Political discussion and media as complementary sources of political influences


Hardy, Bruce W. and Dietram A. Scheufele. 2009. ‘Presidential Campaign Dynamics and the Ebb and Flow of Talk as a Moderator: Media Exposure, Knowledge, and Political Discussion’ in *Communication Theory*, 19, pp. 89-101


EXERCISE

WEEK 10: “Here comes everybody”… or not. Citizens, mass media and political actors in the digital age


WEEK 11: Citizens, mass media and political actors in election campaigns.


or


WEEK 12: The study of political communication in the era of new information and communication technologies


Topic of choice

FINAL EXAM