ENTERTAINMENT AND POLITICS

Department of Political Science
Central European University

MA Programme in Political Science (1- and 2-years)
Winter Term 2016/2017 (2 credits)

Instructor: José Pereira (jose.santana@eui.eu)
Class meetings: Mondays, 13.30-15.10
Office hours: Mondays 15.30-17.00 (schedule a meeting at least 48 hours in advance via e-mail)

Introduction

This course provides an overview of the main theoretical and empirical contributions to the understanding of the relationship between entertainment and politics, a key feature of contemporary political communication in several democracies. Key concepts such as politization of the private persona, celebrization of politics, lifestyle politics, commodification of politics and audience democracy are critically examined. The empirical research on these and related issues will be dissected. Recent real-world examples of the approximation of the spheres of entertainment and politics are systematically analyzed. Lastly, the impact of this trend in terms of quality of democracy is discussed.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students are expected to have:

- A thorough knowledge of the scientific literature on the relationship between entertainment and politics.
- The ability to assess, balance and contrast the weaknesses and strengths of different positions in contemporary debates about the relationship between entertainment and politics.
- An understanding of the research skills necessary to the analysis of this phenomenon in contemporary democracies.
Assessment and requirements

- **Participation** in discussions and exercises (10%).
- **Presentation** (20%). Students are required to present a research article in class (Weeks 9-11). The list of papers to be chosen for the presentations is presented below. The presentation schedule will be set in Week 1, therefore students are expected to come to class with a list of two or three articles that they would like to present.
- **Mid-term written, closed-book, exam** (25%), covering the main theoretical frames and concepts as well as the research discussed in class, in Week 8.
- **A final 3000 words essay** (45%). The essay's topic needs to be approved by the instructor. Students are expected to submit the title, preliminary structure and bibliography (4-6 references) before Week 8. The deadline for submitting the essay (via e-mail) is March 31. Academic dishonesty will be severely punished.

All students must read the mandatory articles/chapters before the class.
Attendance of 90% of the classes is necessary to get a grade.

**Bibliography**


Course programme

Week 1 – Introduction (9 January)

Week 2 – Entertainment and Politics: A Conceptual Map (16 January)

Required reading:


Week 3 – Fictional Political Content and its Effects (23 January)

Required reading:


Week 4 – Political Satire and its Effects (30 January)

Required reading:


Week 5 – Celebrity Politicians (6 February)

Required reading:

Week 6 – Political Gossip and Political Scandals (13 February)

Required reading:


Week 7 – Citizens, Fans or Spectators? (20 February)

Required reading:


Week 8 – Midterm Exam (27 February)

Week 9 – Case Study of Fictional Political Content: House of Cards vs. The West Wing (6 March)

Articles for the presentations:


Week 10 – Case Study of Political Satire: The Daily Show (13 March)

Articles for the presentations:


Week 11 – Case Study of Celebrity Politicians: Italy (20 March)

Articles for the presentations:


Week 12 – Is the Link Between Entertainment and Politics Good or Bad for Democracy? (27 March)

Exercise: Debate in class