

POLS 4399: The Politics of Race and the Media
Texas Tech University, Spring 2022
MWR 2:00–2:50 pm, Holden Hall 121

Instructor: Dr. Vivian Ferrillo

Email: Vivian.Ferrillo@ttu.edu

Office: Holden Hall 016

Office hours: Tuesday 2:00 or by appointment. Drop-ins welcome when my door is open.

TA: Dipak Banjade

Email: Dipak.Banjade@ttu.edu

Office: Holden Hall 079

Office hours: Wednesday 2:00

Course Overview

Don't trust the media? Ever felt manipulated by a campaign or politician and want to know why? POLS-4399 The Politics of Race and the Media is a fast-paced course designed to hone your critical thinking, writing, research, and communication skills while teaching you about race and political media in America. Completing the weekly readings, attending lecture and discussion sessions, and engaging respectfully with peers will be critical to passing the course.

Course Goals

Students should leave this course with an improved understanding of the history of American political media as well as the interactions between mass media, racial attitudes and tropes, and public opinion. Most importantly, however, this course will help you become a more critical consumer of media.

Difficulty

This is a challenging class that requires a fair amount of reading and writing. POLS 4399 will ask you for 50–100 pages of fairly dense reading every week. Some of those readings will consist of academic journal articles; some will be chapters from books. The selection of readings assumes some comfort with academic articles, graphs and data visualizations, and accounts of American racial and electoral politics. If you feel out of your depth at any point, check out the “How to Read Academic Articles” guide on Blackboard or come talk to me.

I do not teach to the test, and I do not post my slides. My exams will ask you to synthesize what you read on your own with what we talk about in lecture and class discussion. In other words, I expect you to take ownership of the materials.

Textbook/Required Texts

There is no textbook for this course. We will be reading academic articles and book chapters. All readings are listed in the schedule starting on page 6 of this syllabus, and all can be accessed in PDF form on Blackboard under “Course Readings > Week #”. Students are encouraged to print out the weekly readings so they can mark them up and bring them to class for easy reference.

Topics we will cover:

- history of mass media in America
- origins of racial attitudes and stereotypes
- setting the narrative (filtering, framing, agenda-setting, etc.)
- racialized policies and political movements
- racial messaging in campaign advertisements
- anxious politics and group psychology
- how the internet changed everything (and nothing)
- social media

Modality

This is an in-person course without hybrid or asynchronous elements. Make sure your personal and work schedule will allow you to attend every class.

How to Enjoy This Class: A Step-by-Step Guide

Anyone can pass a class. But if you want to get real value and enjoyment out of this particular one, here is what you should do.

1. Read all assigned readings for the week *before* class on Monday. Take good notes and bring those notes to class.
2. Show up to class. Take good notes.
3. Attend Friday discussion. First of all, it's worth attendance and participation credit. Second of all, it's tons of fun to support your fellow students leading discussion.
4. Check out bonus media, ask questions, and engage with your classmates on the Discord forum.
5. Choose your discussion weeks strategically. Look for topics or readings you are excited about.
6. Come talk to me in office hours.

Grading Breakdown

- 15%—Participation and attendance (in class, Discord, and during group discussion)
- 5% —Weekly reading quizzes
- 25%—Exams
- 20%—Discussion leader performance, questions, and memo
- 35%—Research paper (topic pitch, outline, and final draft)

Participation

Students who are comfortable participating in group discussion will succeed most easily in this class. Those of you who struggle with public speaking must find other ways to interact with me and your classmates. You can come talk to me after class, visit my office in Holden Hall 016, or post comments in the class Discord (see below).

I expect students to approach each other with respect. Constructive discussion addresses ideas, not people. While the class covers the politics of the real world, it does not take a partisan stance on politicians or events. Our baseline assumption is that politicians and media figures are rational actors who have discernible reasons for making the choices they do.

Reading Quizzes

Every Monday, you will complete a brief quiz on the readings for that week. The quizzes are administered in the first five minutes of class on Monday **only** (no make-ups).

Discussion Leader Assignments

At the beginning of the semester, I'll ask each of you to choose **two weeks** to serve as discussion leader. Students leading discussion will complete the following tasks over the course of that week:

- 1) Due Monday by noon: Write a short summary and reflection essay about the readings for the week. Submit to Blackboard.
- 2) Due Thursday by noon: Create three or more discussion questions addressing readings and lectures. Submit to class Discord AND Blackboard. (Note: Prof. Ferrillo may ask you to make revisions to those questions before class on Friday.)
- 3) Friday during class: Deliver short presentation (10–20 minutes max) and lead class discussion. I highly recommend using slides, incorporating media examples such as short videos or articles, and generally using the time creatively.

Discussion leaders will also be graded on attendance (you can't lead if you're not there!), familiarity with the readings, helpfulness to fellow classmates, and quality of discussion questions. If you are co-leading with another student, you will be graded on how well the two of you collaborate. **For more details on the discussion leader duties and assignments, see the "Writing Good Discussion Questions" and "Disc Leader Essay Guidelines" documents on Blackboard.**

Class Discord Server

We'll use a Discord server to post discussion questions and media examples. Prof. Ferrillo will send out invite links periodically during the first two weeks of the semester.

Late Policy

I generally don't accept late work. If you are in extraordinary circumstances, email me.

Class Notes

Students are responsible for taking their own notes during class. My slides are not meant to be used as study materials, and I do not post my slides on Blackboard. If you must miss class, contact a classmate to obtain notes. Experimental evidence strongly suggests that students who take handwritten notes learn and retain course material more successfully.¹ **If at all possible, I strongly recommend hand writing your notes in a designated notebook instead of typing on a laptop or taking pictures of the slides.**

Exams

There will be exams at the end of each course unit. These exams will be take-home open-note essay exams with extra-credit short answer questions.

¹ Mueller, Pam A., and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking," *Psychological Science* 25, no. 6 (June 2014): 1159–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797614524581>.

Final Research Paper

Your final research paper will be worth a good chunk of your grade. However, to make sure you get the feedback and help you need, I break the project down into multiple graded submissions:

- Topic pitch—due Wednesday Nov 2 @ 11:59 pm
- Outline with annotated sources—due Wednesday Nov 30 @ 11:59 pm
- Optional: extra-credit meetings with Prof. Ferrillo about outline
- Final paper—due Monday December 12 @ noon

ADA Statement

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note: instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact Student Disability Services in West Hall or call 806-742-2405.

Academic Integrity Statement

In order to avoid committing plagiarism, you must properly cite your sources in your written work. I use *Chicago Manual of Style* author-date parenthetical citations. You can access the Chicago Citation Quick Guide for free here:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Academic integrity is taking responsibility for one's own class and/or course work, being individually accountable, and demonstrating intellectual honesty and ethical behavior. Academic integrity is a personal choice to abide by the standards of intellectual honesty and responsibility. Because education is a shared effort to achieve learning through the exchange of ideas, students, faculty, and staff have the collective responsibility to build mutual trust and respect. Ethical behavior and independent thought are essential for the highest level of academic achievement, which then must be measured. Academic achievement includes scholarship, teaching, and learning, all of which are shared endeavors. Grades are a device used to quantify the successful accumulation of knowledge through learning. Adhering to the standards of academic integrity ensures grades are earned honestly. Academic integrity is the foundation upon which students, faculty, and staff build their educational and professional careers. [Texas Tech University ("University") Quality Enhancement Plan, Academic Integrity Task Force, 2010]

Religious Holy Day Statement

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Texas Tax Code §11.20. A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence. A student who is excused under section 2 may not be penalized for the absence; however, the instructor may respond appropriately if the student fails to complete the assignment satisfactorily.

Other Helpful Resources

Undergraduate Writing Center (<https://www.depts.ttu.edu/provost/uwc/undergraduate/>)

Student Counseling Center

- Walk-in and appointment options: <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/treatment-services/getting-started/>
- Phone: 806-742-3674

24-hour crisis helpline for students experiencing a mental health or interpersonal violence crisis:

- Phone: 806-742-5555

Voice of Hope Lubbock Rape Crisis Center

- voiceofhopelubbock.org
- Phone: 806-763-7273

Office of LGBTQIA, Student Union Building Room 201

- www.lgbtqia.ttu.edu
- Phone: 806-742-5433

Title IX Office

- File a report online at titleix.ttu.edu/students
- Call Office for Student Rights & Resolution: 806-742-SAFE (7233)

Course schedule starts on page 6.

Note: Assigned readings may change as the semester continues. Always check the most up-to-date version of the syllabus on Blackboard before reading.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (Aug 26): Introductions and course overview

Week 2 (Aug 29–Sep 2): Mediated reality and rationality

- Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. Ch. 1 (pp. 1–13).
- Page, Benjamin and Robert Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chapter 1, "Rational Public Opinion." Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Week 3 (Sep 7–9): Media effects and the model democratic citizen

No class Monday Sep 5 for Labor Day.

- Page, Benjamin and Robert Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chapter 8, "The Causes of Collective Opinion Change." Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Zaller, John. 2003. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Political Communication*, 20(2): 109–130.

Week 4 (Sep 12–16): Political reality and manipulation.

Guest lecturer Wednesday Sep 14 and Friday Sep 16.

- Page, Benjamin and Robert Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chapter 9, "Education and Manipulation of Public Opinion." Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Week 5 (Sep 19–23): Political effects of ownership and commercial interests

- Wagner, Michael, and Timothy Collins. 2014. "Does Ownership Matter? The Case of Rupert Murdoch's Purchase of the *Wall Street Journal*." *Journalism Practice*, 8(6), 758–771.
- Patterson, Thomas. 1997. "The News Media: An Effective Political Actor?" *Political Communication*. 14(4): 445–455.

Unit 1 Take-Home Exam due Friday @ 11:59 pm.

Week 6 (Sep 26–30): Racial formation and racial attitudes

- Morgan, Edmund S. *American Slavery, American Freedom*. Chapter 16: "Toward Racism."
- W.E.B. Du Bois. *Black Reconstruction in America*. Chapter 1: "The Black Worker."

Week 7 (Oct 3–7): Racial hierarchies and nativism.

- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. 1998. *Whiteness of a Different Color*. Chapters TBD.

Week 8 (Oct 10–14): Racialization.

- Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tesler, Mark. 2012. “The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 56 (3): 690–704.

Week 9 (Oct 17–21): Racial priming.

- Gilliam, Frank, and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. “Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(3): 560–573.
- Valentino, Nicholas, Vincent Hutchings, and Ismail White. 2002. “Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes.” *American Political Science Review*, 96(1): 75–90.

Week 10 (Oct 24–28): Group cues and issue salience.

- Hutchings, Vincent L. 2001. “Political Context, Issue Salience, and Selective Attention: Constituent Knowledge of the Clarence Thomas Confirmation Vote.” *The Journal of Politics* 63, no. 3 (2001): 846–68.
- Dunaway, Johanna, Regina P. Branton, and Marisa A. Abrajano. 2010. “Agenda Setting, Public Opinion, and the Issue of Immigration Reform.” *Social Science Quarterly*, 91(2), 359–378.

Unit 2 Take-Home Exam due Friday @ 11:59 pm

Week 11 (Oct 31–Nov 4): Anxious politics.

- Albertson, Bethany, and Shana K. Gadarian. *Anxious Politics: Democratic Citizenship in a Threatening World*. Cambridge Press. Ch. 4.
- Brader, Ted, Nicholas A. Valentino, and Elizabeth Suhay. 2008. “What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 52 (4), 959–978.

Research paper topic pitch due Wednesday Nov 2 @ 11:59 pm

Week 12 (Nov 7–11): Campaign advertising.

- Brader, Ted. 2005. “Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(2): 399–405.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, Shanto Iyengar, Adam F. Simon, and Nicholas A. Valentino. 1994. “Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?” *American Political Science Review*, 88(4): 829–838.

Week 13 (Nov 14–18): Niche media, in-your-face politics, and distrust

Unit 3 Take-Home Exam due Friday Nov 18 @ 11:59 pm.

- Mutz, Diana. 2015 *In-Your-Face Politics: The Consequences of Uncivil Media*. Ch. TBD. Princeton University Press.
- Levendusky. 2013. “Why Do Partisan Media Polarize Viewers?”
- Prior. 2005. “New vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge.”

Week 14 (Nov 21): Paper outline consultations during class Monday.

Thanksgiving break Nov 23–27

Week 15 (Nov 28–Dec 2): Cyber-optimism and pessimism

Paper outline due Wed Nov 30 @ 11:59 pm.

- Barlow, John Perry. “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace.” February 8, 1996. <https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence>.
- Tucker, John, Yannis Theocharis, Margaret E. Roberts, and Pablo Barberá. 2017. “From Liberation to Turmoil: Social Media and Democracy.” *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 28 (4) October 2017: 46–56.

Week 16 (December 5): Alternative media and the troll.

- Marantz, Andrew. *Antisocial*. Chs. 12–14 (pp. 121–149).

Dec 6: Last day of classes.

Dec 8–13: Finals week

Final draft of research paper due Monday Dec 12 @ noon.

Dec 14: Final grades for graduating students due.

Dec 19: Final grades submitted.