**Course Description:**

This course considers the degree to which Americans’ political opinions and actions are influenced by the mass media, particularly television, as well as the determinants of the mass media’s content. Topics to be covered include the history of the mass media, recent trends in the news media, theories of attitude formation and change, the nature of news, the role of sources in the construction of the news, the economics of news consumption, the ways in which the news shapes the public’s perceptions of the political world, campaign communication, and the general role of the mass media in the democratic process.

**Course Web Site:** [http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/02W/comm160-1/](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/02W/comm160-1/)

This above address will lead you to the web site for CS-160. Various course materials will be posted here, including the syllabus, announcements, answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), and links to web sites pertinent to the course. Students are expected to monitor the course web site throughout the quarter.

**Course Texts:**


*All other readings will be available in a course reader available from Course Reader Material, 1141 Westwood Boulevard, LA, CA 90024. (310) 443-3303*

**Course Assignments**

- **Midterm:** 30% of grade;
- **Final Exam:** 50% of grade
- **Participation/Short Assignments:** 20% of grade.

**Class Policies**

- **Late Exams.** Exams must be taken at the designated time. No late exams will be given. The sole exception is a medical emergency, verified by a doctor’s note on medical stationary.
- **Grading.** Grades will be assigned on the basis of a curve established by the instructor. This information will remain confidential.
- **Grade Disputes.** Students are welcome to protest their grade if they feel it is assigned by criteria not directly reflective of performance in a course, or in the case of a mathematical error. All protests must be in writing, typed, on one page, double-spaced, with normal fonts and margins. Under no circumstances will oral complaints be considered. All complaints must be received within one week (7 days) of the date that the pertinent exam or paper is returned. Again, no exceptions. Be aware that any disputed grade may be raised or lowered on a second reading.
Week 1: January 11, 2002: Class Overview, Development of American Media

Topics: Syllabus, plan for the course, definitions, significance, policies, class survey, historical development of the “old” news media.

Readings:
- Davis, pages 1-10; 25-73.

Video: Historical news video.

Week 2: January 18, 2002: “New” News Media

Topics: New technology, talk radio, cable, and the web.

Readings:
- Davis pp 11-23; 121-132.
- Rosenstiel Ch. 4, 7.
- Baum, Matthew A. and Sam Kernell. 1999. “Has Cable Ended the Golden Age of Presidential Television?” American Political Science Review 93 (March)

Video: Local News (PBS)

Week 3: January 25, 2002: Economics and the news

Topics: Demand, competition, ownership

Readings:
- Rosenstiel, Ch. 2

Video: Illusions of News

Exercise: Ownership debate

Week 4: February 1, 2002: Rules of News Coverage (formal and Informal)

Topics: Economics wrap-up, regulation, norms, bias

Readings:
- Davis, Chs. 4, 5 and 9;
Week 5: February 8, 2002: The Role of Sources in the News

Topics: Sources overview; spin

Readings:


Exercise: Guest speaker: Tom Plate

Week 6: February 15, 2002: Sources, continued

Topics: The pecking order of sources; president, Congress, bureaucracy, supreme court; interest groups

Readings:

- Davis, Ch’s 13-17;

Video: Nightline: “The President Visits the Heartland.”

Week 7: February 22, 2002: Elections and the News

Topics: “Free vs. Paid” media in campaigns; campaign strategies; web campaigning;

Readings:

- Davis Chs 11-12;

Video: Video: The War Room; Campaign Commercials.
Week 8: March 1, 2002: Media Effects, Part 1
Topics: Minimal Effects; Channel effects
Readings:

- Davis Chs 6, 8, 10;

Video: Kennedy-Nixon debates

Week 9: March 8, 2002: Media Effects, Part 2
Topics: Message effects, receiver effects; source effects
Readings:


Week 10: March 15, 2002: Opinion Effects on Policy, Exam Review and Wrapup
Topics: Catch up; polling; public opinion and policy; Review for final exam;
Readings:

- Davis, Ch. 18;
- Sharkey, Jacqueline. 1993. "When Pictures Drive Foreign Policy," American Journalism

Video: Class bias project presentation.

Final Exam scheduled for Thursday, March 21, 2002, 3:00pm-6:00pm