

SOCY 365 01
The Making of Political News
Summer 2017
Tuesday & Thursday: 9:00 – 12:15

Professor: Matthew Mahler
Email: matthew.mahler@yale.edu
Office: 493 College St, Room 104
Office Phone: 203-432-6985

THE MAKING OF POLITICAL NEWS

There are few more overlooked features of democratic life than the basic fact that in order for political news to exist it must get made in and through (the often) contentious relationships between journalists and self-described ‘politicos’ – political operatives or people specializing in the everyday life of politics.

At the heart of these relationships lies a basic contradiction: journalists and politicos operate with conflicting institutional interests, while at the same time having to work together in order to accomplish their basic occupational goals (news outlets must publish stories about politicos and politicos need news outlets to publish stories about them.) Yet, as important as these relational dynamics are in determining what ultimately gets reported as news, they are rarely visible to outsiders to the worlds of journalism and politics. The goal of this class is to open up this black-box of political news-making for analysis so as to equip students to think critically about both the promise and perils the “news” holds for contemporary American political life.

To accomplish this, this course will proceed in three ways. First, we will conduct close readings of ethnographies and (auto)biographies of journalists and politicos in order to expose students to the empirical realities that those actors encounter in their everyday lives. Second, we will situate contemporary news-making in historical context, to make manifest the uniqueness of the current constraints under which journalists and politicos operate. Finally, the course will introduce students to a range of theories that will illuminate the social logics that structure the symbiotic relationships between journalists and politicos. Theories to be discussed include interactionism; ethnomethodology; dramaturgy and other forms of cultural sociology, and field theory.

After completing this class, students will: better appreciate the everyday realities that confront journalists and political actors alike; have a greater capacity for critically reading and assessing political news, and be more informed about the challenges that need to be overcome if news-making is to live up to its democratic promise.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Texts:

- Boczkowski, Pablo J. 2010. *News at Work: Imitation in an Age of Information Abundance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schudson, Michael. 2011. *The Sociology of News (Second Edition)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

- Stephanopoulos, George. 1999. *All Too Human: A Political Education*. Boston: Little Brown and Company.
- Wallace, David Foster. 2008. *McCain's Promise: Aboard the Straight Talk Express with John McCain and a Whole Bunch of Actual Reporters, Thinking about Hope*. New York: Bay Back Books.

All other readings for this class will be available via Canvas. Note – there is a good chance I will make changes to the assigned readings throughout the summer session. I will notify you in advance of any changes.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory.

Readings: You are expected to finish each of the assigned readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. Failure to complete the readings in a timely manner will be evident in your contributions (or lack thereof) during our in-class discussions. Don't think I won't be able to notice the difference! Also – don't be scared by the number of pages you will be reading for some classes. Those days for which you will have the most to read are also those for which I have assigned the easiest texts (and vice versa).

Participation: Since much of the content of this class will be covered through our in-class discussions, in-class participation is something I place a great deal of value on and is thus, something that will count toward your final grade.

Weekly Quizzes: After class each Thursday (with the exception of our last class meeting), I will post a question about that week's material that you will then answer and submit electronically to me by 6:00 PM the next day (Friday). Each answer should be roughly two-to-three double-spaced-pages in length.

Final Paper: The final for this class will be an eight- (double-spaced) page paper. I will present the topic to you at least a week in advance. You must submit your paper NO LATER than 9:00 AM on Wednesday, June 28.

GRADING

Your grade for this class will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation	20 percent
Quizzes	40 percent
Final Paper	40 percent

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students engaging in any behavior not permitted under the university's academic honesty policy will be treated in accordance with those guidelines. There will be no exceptions. For those

unfamiliar with the university's policies on academic honesty, they can be found online at: <http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/academic-dishonesty>.

If you have any questions about what does or does not constitute plagiarism, ask! Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be treated lightly. Fortunately, it is also easy to avoid and if you are the least bit careful about giving credit where credit is due you should not run into any problems.

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a documented disability who may require specific accommodations, please contact me (as well as the Resource Office on Disabilities, 203-432-2324), so that we can arrange the necessary accommodations.

COURSE OUTLINE [May Be Subject To Change]

Tuesday, May 30: What Is News?

Carey, James W. 2007. "A Short History of Journalism for Journalists: A Proposal and Essay." *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 12 (1): 3-16.

Schudson, Michael. 2011. "Introduction," and "Media Bias (Media Effects)." Pp xiii – xxi and 26 – 31 in *The Sociology of News (Second Edition)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Tuchman, Gaye. 1980. "News as a Frame." Pp 1 – 9 in *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: The Free Press.

Cook, Timothy. 2005. "The Political Development of the American news Media," and "The Subsidized News Media." Pp. 17 – 19 and 38 – 60 in *Governing with the News: The News Media as Political Institution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Thursday, June 1: On the Changing Norms of Journalistic Production

Schudson, Michael. 2011. "Where News Came From: The History of Journalism to Watergate" and "In Recent Memory: News from Watergate to the Web." Pp 64 – 106 in *The Sociology of News (Second Edition)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Competing Visions of What it Means to Be "Objective":

Rosen, Jay. 2016. "Evidence-Based vs Accusation-Driven Reporting." https://storify.com/jay_rosen_nyu/evidence-based-vs-accusation-driven-reporting.

Case Study One:

Mathis-Liley, Ben. 2016. "I Participated in the Russian Intelligence Plot to Elect Donald Trump and I Guess I'd Do it Again." *Slate*. December 12. http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2016/12/12/the_entire_media_is_complicit_in_russia_s_alleged_operation_to_elect_trump.html

Blake, Aaron. 2016. "Did the Media Become a 'De Facto' Instrument of Russian Intelligence?" *Washington Post*. December 14. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/12/14/did-the-media-become-a-de-facto-instrument-of-russian-intelligence/?utm_term=.535e5bc19b40

Case Study Two:

Smith, Ben. 2017. "Why BuzzFeed News Published the Dossier." *The New York Times*. January 23. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/23/opinion/why-buzzfeed-news-published-the-dossier.html>

Graham, David A. 2017. "The Trouble with Publishing the Trump Dossier." *The Atlantic*. January 11. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/why-did-buzzfeed-publish-the-trump-dossier/512771/>.

Optional: [Original publication:] Bensinger, Ken; Miriam Elder; and Mark Schoofs. 2017. "These Reports Allege Trump Has Deep Ties to Russia." *BuzzFeed*. January 10. https://www.buzzfeed.com/kenbensinger/these-reports-allege-trump-has-deep-ties-to-russia?utm_term=.ptXPQ77NP0#.auBdWqq0dx.

Tuesday, June 6: On Being a Journalist

Darnton, Robert. 1975. "Writing News and Telling Stories." *Daedalus* 104 (2): 175 – 194.

Schudson, Michael. 2011. "News Sources." Pp 127 – 146 in *The Sociology of News. The Sociology of News (Second Edition)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Gans, Herbert. [1979] 2004. "Sources and Journalists." Pp 116 – 145 in *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Boczkowski, Pablo J. 2010. *News at Work: Imitation in an Age of Information Abundance* (Chapters 2, 3, and 4; pp 34 - 115). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Thursday, June 8: Re-Thinking the Economics of Journalism in a Digital Age

Schudson, Michael. 2011. "News in the Marketplace" and "The First News Revolution of the Twenty-First Century." Pp 109 – 125 and 205 – 230 in *The Sociology of News. The Sociology of News (Second Edition)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Blanda, Sean. 2017. "Medium, and The Reason You Can't Stand the News Anymore." *Medium*. <https://medium.com/@SeanBlanda/medium-and-the-reason-you-cant-stand-the-news-anymore-c98068fec3f8#.2hbhhwc90>. January 15.

The New York Times. 2017. "Journalism that Stands apart: The Report of the 2020 Group." <https://www.nytimes.com/projects/2020-report/>. January 17.

Pope, Kyle. 2017. "Revolution at the *Washington Post*." *Columbia Journalism Review*, Fall/Winter 2016. http://www.cjr.org/q_and_a/washington_post_bezos_amazon_revolution.php.

Bell, Emily and Taylor Owen. 2017. "The Platform Press: How Silicon Valley Re-Engineered Journalism." *The Tow Center for Digital Journalism*. https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/platform-press-how-silicon-valley-reengineered-journalism.php. March 29.

Tuesday, June 13: "Fake" "News"!?

James, William. 1978. *The Meaning of Truth* (preface only). Pp 110 – 111 in *Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Silverman, Craig. 2016. "This Analysis Shows How Viral Fake Election News Stories Outperformed Real News On Facebook." *Buzzfeed*, November 16. https://www.buzzfeed.com/craigsilverman/viral-fake-election-news-outperformed-real-news-on-facebook?utm_term=.iwZbD7wWM#.jwm95oKW3.

McCoy, Terrance. 2016. "For the 'New Yellow Journalists,' Opportunity Comes in Clicks and Bucks." *The Washington Post*, November 20. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/for-the-new-yellow-journalists-opportunity-comes-in-clicks-and-bucks/2016/11/20/d58d036c-adbf-11e6-8b45-f8e493f06fcd_story.html?utm_term=.c83399c2f74a

Maheshwari, Sapna. 2016. "How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study." *New York Times*, November 20. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/how-fake-news-spreads.html>.

Shane, Scott. 2017. "From Headline to Photograph, a Fake News Masterpiece." *The New York Times*, January 18. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/us/fake-news-hillary-clinton-cameron-harris.html>.

Nelson, Jacob L. 2017. "Is 'Fake News' a Problem?" *Columbia Journalism Review*, January 31. <http://www.cjr.org/analysis/fake-news-facebook-audience-drudge-breitbart-study.php>

Darnton, Robert. 2017. "The True History of Fake News." *The New York Review of Books*, February 13. <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2017/02/13/the-true-history-of-fake-news>

Uberti, David. 2016. "The Real History of Fake News." *Columbia Journalism Review*, December 15. http://www.cjr.org/special_report/fake_news_history.php.

Schudson, Michael. 2017. "Here's What Non-Fake News Looks Like." *Columbia Journalism Review*, February 23. <http://www.cjr.org/analysis/fake-news-real-news-list.php>.

Boczkowski, Pablo. 2016. "Fake News and the Future of Journalism." *NiemanLab*, December. <http://www.niemanlab.org/2016/12/fake-news-and-the-future-of-journalism>.

Thursday, June 15: An Introduction to Everyday Political Life (and its History)

Parsons, Lynn Hudson. 2009. *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828* (pp 133 – 187). New York: Oxford University Press.

Greenberg, David. 2016. *Republic of Spin: An Inside History of the American Presidency* (pp 1 – 58). New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Stephanopoulos, George. 1999. *All Too Human: A Political Education* (Selections). Boston: Little, Brown, and Books.

Tuesday, June 20: Thinking Conceptually about What Makes Public Life Unique (Part I)

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Pp 1 – 16). New York: Anchor Books.

Heritage, John. 1984. "The Problem of Intersubjectivity," "The Constituent Tasks of Making Sense," and "Accounts and Accountings." Pp 54 – 56 (stop at bottom of 56 – don't continue onto 57), 84 – 97, 135 – 159 in *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Vaughn, Diane. [1986] 1990. "Introduction," "Secrets," and "Signals, Secrets, and Collaborative Cover-Up." Pp 3 – 27 and 62 – 78 in *Uncoupling: Turning Points in Intimate Relationships*. New York: Vintage.

Thursday, June 22: Thinking Conceptually about What Makes Public Life Unique (Part II)

Schutz, Alfred. 1976. "The World of Contemporaries as a Structure of Typifications." Pp 37 – 55 in *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory*, edited by Arvid Brodersen. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. "Social Interaction in Everyday Life" "Foundations of Knowledge in Everyday Life," "Maintenance and Transformation of Subjective Reality." Pp 28 – 34, 44 – 46, 149 - 163 in *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Anchor Books.

Suchman, Lucy. 2007. "Communicative Resources." Pp 85 – 108 in *Human-Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tuesday, June 27: On the Centrality of (Mis)Understanding in Political Life

Mahler, Matthew. (N.D.) “Everyday Political Life and the Making of a World-in-Common.”

Cramer, Richard Ben. 1992. Read vii – xi (intro and methods), then pp 3 – 29, 112 – 130, 150 – 154, 561 – 584 in *What It Takes: The Way to the White House*. New York: Random House.

Wallace, David Foster. 2008. “Glossary of Relevant Campaign Trail Vocab,” “Substantially Farther Behind the Scenes,” “Negativity,” and “Suck It Up.” Pp 21 – 52 and 59 – 124 in *McCain’s Promise: Aboard the Straight Talk Express with John McCain and a Whole Bunch of Actual Reporters, Thinking about Hope*. New York: Bay Back Books.

Thursday, June 29: Is There a Better Way to Make (Political) News?

Cramer, Richard Ben. 1992. *What It Takes: The Way to the White House* (pp 172 – 174, 178 – 179, 317 – 319; 351 – 359; 375 – 393; 431 - 475). New York: Random House.

Bai, Matt. *All the Truth is Out: The Week Politics Went Tabloid* (pp 118 – 195; 241 – 244). New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Rosen, Jay. 2016. “Prospects for the American Press under Trump, Part Two.” <http://pressthink.org/2016/12/prospects-american-press-trump-part-two/>.