

# POL410/2391

## Topics in Comparative Politics III: Media & Politics

**Date/Time:** Monday, 10AM-12PM

**Location:** BL113

**Instructor:** Prof. Eric Merkley

**Email:** eric.merkley@utoronto.ca

**Office:** Room 3121, Sidney Smith Hall

**Office Hours:** Mondays 12:30-1:30pm and by appointment

### 1. Overview and Objectives

News media have long played an enormous role in democratic politics by shaping the behaviour of citizens and political elites alike. Technological changes over the past several decades have radically transformed the way politics is reported by journalists and discussed by citizens. This course will introduce students to important debates at the intersection of media and politics in Canada and other Western democracies. Topics include the historical development of news media, framing and priming effects, agenda setting, the rise of social media and the changing media landscape, echo chambers and partisan media, media bias, and problems of misinformation.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify key changes in the news media environment over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in Canada, the U.S., and other western democracies, and their consequences.
- Understand key debates surrounding the relationship between soft news, media effects, media biases, social media, partisan media, and misinformation and democratic politics.
- Identify gaps in understanding in current literature and generate research questions on topics related to media & politics
- Synthesize existing research on media & politics and/or craft research designs that can shed light on existing debates in media & politics.

### 2. Course Format

The class is conducted in a seminar format on Mondays from 10am-12pm. Attendance is mandatory. Class participation and in-class presentations together constitute a sizable amount of your grade. Seminars will be conducted in-person. The format of the course, however, is subject to change depending on evolving COVID-19 public health guidelines.

### 3. Required Texts and Materials:

- **Readings.** As listed below in the detailed syllabus, most required readings for the course are electronically available through the library. Readings that are not available online through the library are indicated with a (\*) and will be available to download through Quercus.
- **Course webpage and emails.** There is a course webpage on Quercus. I will use this page to post important course documents (readings, syllabus, assessment instructions, etc.), post announcements and send emails to you throughout the term. It is your responsibility to regularly check Quercus for updates.
- **Google account.** I will be using Google Docs in a Google Drive folder for the Summary and Reaction Documents

### 4. Grading and Assessed Coursework

Assignment	Date/Due Date	Percentage of Overall Grade
Class participation	All Lectures	20%
Summary and Reaction Documents (SRD)	Friday at 6pm before class meets	20%
Comments on Summary and Reaction Documents	Before class of assigned SRD	5%
Presentations	During the class of your assigned SRD	20%
Final Paper Outline	November 1, 11:59m	10%
Final Paper	December 9, 11:59pm	25%

#### 4.1 Class Participation (20%)

The success of a seminar course depends on the active and thoughtful participation of all students. There is significant weight placed on this aspect of your work. I will not only, or even mostly, judge this grade based on the quantity of speaking that you do, but rather the quality of your comments and the evidence that you are thoughtfully and respectfully engaging with the course readings **and** the comments made by your classmates. Failing to attend seminar will guarantee a grade of zero for a particular session unless prior accommodation is made.

#### 4.2 Summary and Reaction Documents and Associated Commentary (25%)

Starting in Week 2 you will be required to participate in the development of summary and reaction documents (SRD) that are shared online for each reading (including recommended readings) in

every week of the course. The initial SRD documents will be composed by the student(s) presenting each week. If there is more than one student presenting in a week, then responsibility for the week's SRDs will be divided between them. Then, all other students will be expected to comment on the posted SRDs. More details are in the assignment handout found on Quercus.

Preliminary feedback on SRD contributions will be given midway through the term, and overall contributions will be assigned a grade at the end of the term. Graduate students are expected to complete two initial SRDs (10%X2), while undergraduate students will complete one over the course of the term (20%).

The quantity and quality of comments on other classmates' SRDs will be worth 5% cumulatively. The initial SRDs are due each week on the Friday before class at 6pm for presenters, though the earlier the better. All comments on the SRDs are due before class meets on Monday. You will be asked to identify the weeks that you wish to write SRDs and make presentations in the first class.

#### 4.3 Presentations (20%)

Each week two or more students will lead off discussion in class for that week with a short presentation of about 6-8 minutes each outlining their reaction to the readings and raising questions for the class to discuss. Your presentation should give only very brief summaries of the readings' arguments, since all students will have read the readings and will have access to the SRDs. You should focus on your own reactions to the readings, your reactions to the online comments of your classmates, and how the readings speak to one another. You should also provide questions for further class discussion. You will be asked to identify the weeks that you wish to write SRDs and make presentations in the first class. Graduate students will be expected to give two presentations (10%X2), while undergraduate students will give one presentation (20%).

#### 4.4 Final Paper and Preliminary Outline (35%)

You are responsible for completing a final paper. Graduate students have a choice of one of two options:

- 1) **Literature review:** this will be a paper that synthesizes the existing research on a particular research question related to course content. What does the research find? What are its limitations? What are unanswered questions? What are possible new directions for research on this topic?
- 2) **Research proposal:** this will be a proposal for an *empirical* research project on a specific topic related to course content. What is your research question? What does existing research tell us about this question? What data will you use or collect? What are your key concepts and how will you measure them? What are your hypotheses? How will you test your hypotheses? What are the implications of an affirmative (or null) result?

Both of these options require engagement with existing research, though the amount of secondary research and the depth of engagement with these sources will necessarily be greater in a literature review paper than the research proposal. The objective of this assignment is to have all students leave this class with material that can allow them to prepare for comprehensive exams at the graduate level or with an actionable research proposal that can be turned into a peer-reviewed publication upon completion.

Undergraduate students are expected to complete a literature review unless they gain explicit approval from me in advance of key deadlines (see below) to do a research proposal.

This paper will be completed in two stages. The first stage is to provide an outline of your literature review or research proposal. The outline can consist of detailed bullet points, but it must be properly sourced. It should be 3-4 pages long. This is due on Quercus at 11:59PM on November 1st. It is worth 10% of your grade. The purpose of this task is to allow me to provide formal feedback on your project. Late outlines will be accepted for the purpose of providing feedback, but they will be assigned a zero unless prior accommodation has been made.

The second stage is to provide your final paper. You will be expected to address the comments I provide in your outline. The final paper should be between 15 and 20 pages (without references), or approximately 4500-6000 words. This is an approximate range. Well-crafted research proposals will likely be on the lower end of this range. The final paper is due on Quercus at 11:59PM on December 9th. Without documentation, late essays will be penalized 5 points out of 100 per day, including weekends. More details on the final paper can be found in a handout on Quercus.

## 5. Course Schedule and Readings

### Topic 1 (September 13) – Course Structure, Requirements, and Objectives

Readings:

- Course Syllabus

### Topic 2 (September 13) – Foundations

Readings:

- Lippman, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. Ch. 1, 21-24. (\*)
- Bennett, W. L. (2003). *News: The politics of illusion*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Longman, Ch. 1 (\*)
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Vos, T. P. (2009). *Gatekeeping theory*. New York: Routledge, Part 1.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106924594406196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106924594406196).
- Stromback, J. (2008). Four phases of mediatization: An analysis of the mediatization of politics. *The International Journal of Press/politics*, 13(3), 228–246.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161208319097>.
- Zaller, J. (2003). A new standard of news quality: Burglar alarms for the monitorial citizen. *Political Communication*, 20, 109–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390211136>.
  - Rejoinder: Bennet, W. L. (2003). The burglar alarm that just keeps on ringing: A response to Zaller. *Political Communication*, 20, 131-138.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390211145>.

Recommended:

- Zaller, J. (1991). Information, values, and opinion. *American Political Science Review*, 85(4), 1215-1237. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1963943>.
- Shoemaker, P., & Reese, S. D. (2014). *Mediating the message in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: a media sociology perspective*. New York: Routledge, Ch. 1.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106942062906196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106942062906196).

Topic 3 (September 20) – The Changing Media Environment

Readings:

- Ladd, J. L. (2012). *Why Americans hate the media and how it matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Ch. 2-3.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106228768006196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106228768006196).
- Schudson, M. (1976). *Discovering the News: A social history of American newspapers*. New York: Basic Books, Ch. 1. (\*)
- Bennett, L.W., & Iyengar, S. (2008). A new era of minimal effects: The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58(4), 707–731.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00410.x>.
  - Rejoinder: Holbert, R. L., Garrett, R. K., & Gleason, L. S. (2010). A new era of minimal effects? A response to Bennett and Iyengar. *Journal of Communication*, 60(1), 15–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01470.x>
- Armstrong, R. (2016). *Broadcasting policy in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Ch. 2-3.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/fedca1/cdi\\_scopus\\_primary\\_609999987](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/fedca1/cdi_scopus_primary_609999987).

Recommended:

- Ladd, J. L. (2012). *Why Americans hate the media and how it matters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, Ch. 4.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106228768006196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106228768006196).
- Abernathy, P. M. *The expanding local news desert*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: UNC Press, pp. 5-58.  
[https://www.cislm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-Expanding-News-Desert-10\\_14-Web.pdf](https://www.cislm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/The-Expanding-News-Desert-10_14-Web.pdf)

Topic 4 (September 27) – Entertainment Media and Soft News

Readings:

- Prior, M. (2007). Post-broadcast democracy: How media choice increases inequality in political involvement and polarizes elections. Ch. 1, 4, 7.

[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/fedca1/cdi\\_as\\_kewsholts\\_vlebooks\\_9781139878425](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/fedca1/cdi_as_kewsholts_vlebooks_9781139878425).

- Baum, M. A., & Jamison, A. S. (2006). The Oprah effect: How soft news helps inattentive citizens vote consistently. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(4), 946–959.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00482.x>.
- Baum, M. A. (2005). Talking the vote: What happens when presidential candidates hit the talk show circuit? *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(2), 213–234.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0092-5853.2005.t01-1-00119.x>.
- Feldman, L., & Young, D. G. (2008). Late-night comedy as a gateway to traditional news: An analysis of time trends in news attention among late-night comedy viewers during the 2004 presidential primaries. *Political Communication*, 25(4), 401–422.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600802427013>.

#### Recommended:

- Prior, M. (2007). Post-broadcast democracy: How media choice increases inequality in political involvement and polarizes elections. Ch. 5.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/fedca1/cdi\\_as\\_kewsholts\\_vlebooks\\_9781139878425](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/fedca1/cdi_as_kewsholts_vlebooks_9781139878425).
- Prior, M. (2003). Any good news in soft news? The impact of soft news preference on political knowledge. *Political Communication*, 20(2), 149–171.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390211172>.
  - Rejoinder: Baum, M. A. (2003). Soft news and political knowledge: Evidence of absence or absence of evidence? *Political Communication*, 20(2), 173–190.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390211181>.

#### Topic 5 (October 4) – Media Systems, Regulation and Public Broadcasting

#### Readings:

- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 2-4.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/fedca1/cdi\\_gale\\_infotracacademiconefile\\_A158815935](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/fedca1/cdi_gale_infotracacademiconefile_A158815935).
- Graber, D., & Dunaway, J., *Mass media and American politics*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press, Ch. 2, “Ownership, Regulation, and Guidance of Media.” (\*)
- Aalberg, T., van Aelst, P., & Curran, J. (2010). Media systems and the political information environment: A cross-national comparison. *The International Journal of Press/politics*, 15(3), 255–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161210367422>.
- Soroka, S., Andrew, B., Aalberg, T., Iyengar, S., Curran, J., Coen, S., Hayashi, K., Jones, P., Mazzoleni, G., Woong Rhee, J., Rowe, D., & Tiffen, R. (2013). Auntie knows best? Public broadcasters and current affairs knowledge. *British Journal of Political Science*, 43(4), 719–739.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123412000555>.

Recommended:

- Kerbel, M. R., Apee, S., & Ross, M. H. (2000). PBS ain't so different: Public broadcasting, election frames, and democratic empowerment. *Harvard International Journal of Press/politics*, 5(4), 8–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X00005004002>.
- Debrett, M. (2009). Riding the wave: public service television in the multi-platform era. *Media, Culture & Society*, 31(5), 807–827. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443709339466>.

**Thanksgiving: No class on October 11 (and no office hours)**

#### Topic 6 (October 18) – Media Effects: Agenda-Setting and Priming

Readings:

- Soroka, S. (2002). *Agenda Setting Dynamics in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press, Ch. 1-2, 6. [https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106621466206196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106621466206196).
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. (1987). *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 7 (\*)
- Mendelberg, T. (1997). Executing Hortons: Racial crime in the 1988 presidential campaign. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 61(1), 134–157. <https://doi.org/10.1086/297790>.
- Lenz, G. S. (2009). Learning and opinion change, not priming: Reconsidering the priming hypothesis. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(4), 821–837. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2009.00403.x>.

Recommended:

- Boydston, A. (2013). *Making the news: Politics, the media, and agenda-setting*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 1-3. (\*)
- Johnston, R. (1992). *Letting the people decide dynamics of a Canadian election*. McGill-Queen's University Press. Prologue, Ch. 8. [https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106930499006196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106930499006196).

#### Topic 7 (October 25) – Media Effects: Framing

Readings:

- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10(1), 103–126. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054>.
- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 2, 4. (\*)
- Tolley, E. (2015). *Framed: media and the coverage of race in Canadian politics*. Vancouver: UBC Press, Ch. 1-2. [https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106924067006196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106924067006196).

- Bechtel, M. M., Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D., & Helbling, M. (2015). Reality bites: The limits of framing effects for salient and contested policy issues. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 3(3), 683–695. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2014.39>.

Recommended:

- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing public opinion in competitive democracies. *The American Political Science Review*, 101(4), 637–655. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055407070554>.
- Gilens, M. (1999). *Why Americans hate welfare: Race, media, and the politics of antipoverty policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 5. (\*)

#### Topic 8 (November 1) – Media Bias: Commercial and Organizational

Readings:

- Bennett, W. L. (2003). *News: The politics of illusion*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Longman, Ch. 2. (\*)
- Graber, D., & Dunaway, J., *Mass media and American politics*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press, Ch. 5, “News Making and News Reporting Routines” (\*)
- Bennett, W. L. (1990). Toward a theory of press-state relations in the United States. *Journal of Communication*, 40(2), 103–127. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1990.tb02265.x>.
- Munger, K. (2020). All the news that’s fit to click: The economics of clickbait media. *Political Communication*, 37(3), 376–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1687626>.
- Soroka, S. (2014). *Negativity in democratic politics: Causes and consequences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 2, 5. [https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106890496606196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106890496606196).

Recommended:

- Soroka, S. (2014). *Negativity in democratic politics: Causes and consequences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 6. [https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106890496606196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106890496606196).
- Merkley, E. (2020). Are experts (news)worthy? Balance, conflict, and mass media coverage of expert consensus. *Political Communication*, 37(4), 530–549. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1713269>.

**Fall Reading Week: No class on November 8 (and no office hours)**

#### Topic 9 (November 15) – Media Bias: Corporate and Ideological

Readings:

- Schiffer, A. (2017). *Evaluating media bias*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Ch. 2-3. (\*)



- Cooper, B., & Miljan, L. (2003). *Hidden agendas: How journalists influence the news*. Vancouver: UBC Press, Ch. 5-6 (pp. 95-104, 124-137).  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106964189406196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106964189406196).
- Dunaway, J. (2008). Markets, ownership, and the quality of campaign news coverage. *The Journal of Politics*, 70(4), 1193–1202. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381608081140>
- Hassell, H. J. G., Holbein, J. B., & Miles, M. R. (2020). There is no liberal media bias in which news stories political journalists choose to cover. *Science Advances*, 6(14).  
<https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aay9344>
- Martin, G. J., & McCrain, J. (2019). Local news and national politics. *American Political Science Review*, 113(2), 372–384. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055418000965>.

#### Recommended:

- Cooper, B., & Miljan, L. (2003). *Hidden agendas: How journalists influence the news*. Vancouver: UBC Press, Ch. 4.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106964189406196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106964189406196).
- Groseclose, T., & Milyo, J. (2005). A measure of media bias. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 120(4), 1191–1237. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355305775097542>.
- Gentzkow, M., & Shapiro, J. M. (2010). What drives media slant? Evidence from U.S. daily newspapers. *Econometrica*, 78(1), 35–71. <https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA7195>

#### Topic 10 (November 22) – Partisan Media, Selective Exposure and Echo Chambers

#### Readings:

- Iyengar, S., & Hahn, K. (2009). Red media, blue media: Evidence of ideological selectivity in media use. *Journal of Communication*, 59(1), 19–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01402.x>.
- Levendusky, M. *How partisan media polarize America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 3-4. (\*)
- Garrett, R. K. (2009). Politically motivated reinforcement seeking: Reframing the selective exposure debate. *Journal of Communication*, 59(4), 676–699. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01452.x>
- Sobieraj, S., & Berry, J. M. (2011). From incivility to outrage: Political discourse in blogs, talk radio, and cable news. *Political Communication*, 28(1), 19–41.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2010.542360>.
- Guess, A.M. (2021). (Almost) everything in moderation: New evidence on Americans' online media diets. *American Journal of Political Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12589>.
- Bridgman, A., Gorwa, R., Loewen, P. J., MacLellan, S., Merkley, E., Owen, T., Ruths, D., Zhilin, O. (2020). Lessons in resilience: Canada's digital media ecosystem and the 2019

election. Digital Democracy Project Report. Ottawa: Public Policy Forum, Ch. 2.1, 2.5  
<https://ppforum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/DDP-LessonsInResilience-MAY2020-EN.pdf>.

Recommended:

- Stroud, N. (2010). Polarization and partisan selective exposure. *Journal of Communication*, 60(3), 556–576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01497.x>.
- Pinna, M., Picard L., Goessmann, C. (2021). Cable news and COVID-19 vaccine compliance. *Center for Law & Economics Working Paper Series 9*. [Link](#)

No class November 29 (or office hours)

Topic 11 (December 6) – Social Media

Readings:

- Bode, L. (2012). Facebooking it to the polls: A study in online social networking and political behavior. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 9, 352-369.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2012.709045>.
- Bode, L. (2016). Political news in the news feed: Learning politics from social media. *Mass Communication & Society*, 19(1), 24–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1045149>.
- Settle, J. E. (2018). *Frenemies: How social media polarizes America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 3-4.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106937896106196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106937896106196).
- Bail, C. A., Argyle, L. P., Brown, T. W., Bumpus, J. P., Chen, H., Fallin Hunzaker, M. , Lee, J., Mann, M., Merhout, F., & Volfovsky, A. (2018). Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115(37), 9216–9221. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1804840115>
- McGregor, S. C. (2019). Social media as public opinion: How journalists use social media to represent public opinion. *Journalism*, 20(8), 1070–1086.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919845458>

Recommended:

- Settle, J. E. (2018). *Frenemies: How social media polarizes America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 7.  
[https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO\\_INST/14bjeso/alma991106937896106196](https://librarysearch.library.utoronto.ca/permalink/01UTORONTO_INST/14bjeso/alma991106937896106196).
- Bond, R. M., Fariss, C. J., Jones, J. J., Kramer, A. D. I., Marlow, C., Settle, J. E., & Fowler, J. H. (2012). A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization. *Nature*, 489(7415), 295–298. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature11421>.

## Topic 12 (December 9) – Fake News and Misinformation

### Readings:

- Flynn, D., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2017). The nature and origins of misperceptions: understanding false and unsupported beliefs about politics: Nature and origins of misperceptions. *Political Psychology*, 38, 127–150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12394>.
- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D.G. (2021). The psychology of fake news. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 25(5), 388–402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2021.02.007>.
- Guess, A.M., Nagler, J., & Tucker, J. (2019). Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook. *Science Advances*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aau4586>.
- Osmundsen, M., Bor, A., Vahlstrup, P. B., Bechmann, A., & Petersen, M. (2021). Partisan polarization is the primary psychological motivation behind political fake news sharing on Twitter. *American Political Science Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000290>
- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2019). Lazy, not biased: Susceptibility to partisan fake news is better explained by lack of reasoning than by motivated reasoning. *Cognition*, 188, 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2018.06.011>
- Bridgman, A., Merkley, E., Zhilin, O., Loewen, P.J., Owen, T., & Ruths, D. (2021). Infodemic pathways: evaluating the role that traditional and social media play in cross-national information transfer. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.648646>.

### Recommended:

- Wood, T., & Porter, E. (2019). The elusive backfire effect: Mass attitudes' steadfast factual adherence. *Political Behavior*, 41(1), 135–163. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9443-y>.
- Uscinski, J. E., & Butler, R. W. (2013). The epistemology of fact checking. *Critical Review*, 25(2), 162-180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08913811.2013.843872>.

## **6. Course Policies**

### **6.1 Contacting Course Instructor**

I strongly recommend asking substantive questions about course content and requirements during class (for the benefit of everyone) or in my scheduled office hours. Email should be reserved strictly for time sensitive questions or quick points of clarification. I will try to respond within 24 hours, but emails received during the weekend will be answered on Monday.

### **6.2 Possible Changes to the Syllabus**

I reserve the right to make adjustments to the course syllabus depending on evolving COVID-19 policies set by the University of Toronto. I will give notice to students in the event of any changes, and amended syllabi will be posted on Quercus.

### 6.3 Missing Class and Late Assignments

Attendance and participation is required at all class sessions due to the intensive nature of this course. Late SRDs or comments on SRDs **will not be accepted** except in the event of a documented serious illness or serious personal emergency (see section on Accommodation below). Late final literature reviews or research designs will be penalized 5 points out of 100 per day, including weekends, except in the event of a documented serious illness or serious personal emergency (see section on Accommodation below).

### 6.4 Accommodation for Emergency Situations

Students who need additional time for an assignment or will miss a lecture for a medical or serious personal reason must contact me **before** the due date or lecture date and as soon as the problem arises. All requests for accommodation must be made to the professor directly, in writing, via email.

Some documentation, such as a doctor's note, will usually be required to make accommodation. For the 2021-22 year, students who are absent from academic participation for any reason (e.g., COVID, cold, flu and other illness or injury, family situation) and who require consideration for missed academic work are to record their absence through the ACORN online absence declaration. Please note that accommodations will not be made for foreseeable circumstances, such as having multiple papers due in the same week. Accommodations are reserved for unforeseeable events that are outside a student's control (e.g., illness, a death in the family).

Requests for accommodation **made on or after an assignment's due date, or after the missed lecture will not be considered**. Due date extensions will not usually be granted for work lost due to computer crashes or the loss of a computer file. There are simple and free ways of regularly and automatically backing up your work. Students are strongly advised to backup copies of their essays and assignments before submitting. These backups should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned.

### 6.5 Other Accommodations

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Accessibility Services office](#).

The University provides reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences and instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations or other compulsory activities at these times. Please reach out

to me as early as possible to communicate any anticipated absences related to religious observances, and to discuss any possible related implications for course work.

## **6.6 Equity and Harassment**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

## **6.7 Academic Integrity and Responsibility**

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The [University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

### In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor in all relevant courses
- Making up sources or facts
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment

### On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test
- Misrepresenting your identity

### In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources (for example, the [University of Toronto website on Academic Integrity](#)).

## 6.8 Turnitin

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site. The use of Turnitin.com is voluntary. Please contact me *at the beginning of the term* for an alternate means of submission if you do not wish to use the service.