Political Communication
POLI 7903
1:30-4:30 pm Wednesdays
210 Stubbs (Political Science Conference Room)

Professor Johanna Dunaway
Office: 213 Stubbs Hall
Hours: MW 4:30-6:00 pm, and by 1(pt.

E-mail: jdunaway@lsu.edu
Web: www.johannadunaway.com
Phone: (225) 578-2553

Overview
This course is an advanced introduction to theory and research in the field of political communication. Its goal is to acquaint students with the field's history, research questions, theoretical approaches, empirical accomplishments, and likely future directions.

No course can be fully comprehensive, and in order to best serve students taking this one, the instructor has limited the range of topics to a manageable few. Four omissions are notable. First, students should be aware that most of the course readings apply mainly to political communication systems in the United States, with a few exceptions. This course mostly ignores a broader range of important work done by political communication scholars that addresses the interaction between news media, audiences, and politicians in within and across other countries. Cross-national political communication research is a thriving area of scholarship that deserves a course of its own, and interested students are encouraged to follow up on this course by examining political communication research directed at systems outside the United States.

Second, this course covers the social-scientific study of political communication that is being conducted primarily by political scientists and communication scholars. Neglected almost entirely is a much broader range of humanistic and qualitative research on political communication that traces back to Aristotle's Rhetoric and is currently pursued by scholars of rhetoric, cultural studies, and media studies. This choice reflects the unfortunate historical divergence of qualitative and quantitative political communication scholarship, and a division of scholarly labor that now emphasizes specialization in one or the other area of research. This course is an introduction to the quantitative side of political communication research only, and students interested in pursuing this subject further are strongly encouraged to consider coursework in media studies, rhetorical criticism, and rhetorical theory.

Third, this course has been designed to provide a broad overview of many important theoretical developments and debates in the field of political communication, but this broad theoretical overview necessarily ignores huge chunks of literature focusing on specific topic areas. For instance, the class will hardly touch on the subject of social capital and media use even though this is currently a vibrant research area among political communication scholars. This choice to privilege theory over broad literature reviews was made with a hope and an assumption. The assumption is that class time is better used discussing theoretical approaches and controversies rather than merely bringing students up to speed with broad areas of the research literature. The hope is that once students are armed with the theoretical insights gained from this course, they will be prepared to efficiently and effectively navigate their own way through these research literatures.

Fourth, different aspects of mass-mediated political communication are studied by political communication researchers, some of which are also studied by broader scholarly communities and are covered in other
courses available in the political science and mass communication departments. To avoid overlapping topics and to allow us to go in depth on research areas that are uniquely pursued by political communication scholars, this course will largely ignore relevant topics in the areas of media effects, policymaking, social networks, campaign effects and new media technologies to privilege areas of inquiry that are not duplicated elsewhere in the academy.

Objectives
This course is intended to provide students with a broad overview of the political communication subfield. The assigned readings along with the recommended readings constitute a foundational part of what every well-trained political communication scholar should know about the field. By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- understand the study of political communication as an inherently interdisciplinary project
- appreciate a broad range of theoretical concepts and empirical approaches that play important roles in political communication research
- recognize the strengths and weaknesses of these theoretical concepts and empirical approaches

Required Books


Other Readings
This course has a Moodle site that will be the primary vehicle for receiving course assignments and distributing course-related materials in electronic form. Readings from the course schedule marked with (M) denote readings that are posted on Moodle. Readings marked with (LSUL) denote those you must locate using the LSU library system. Two important reminders: electronic copies of readings obtained through the library system or the course Moodle are not for redistribution to persons outside this class.
**Assignments and Course Grade**

Your final grade for this course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

- Final research paper (40% of final grade)
- Weekly participation in class discussions (20% of final grade)
- Small papers based on assigned readings (12-15 short papers, 40% of final grade)

**Final research paper or take-home exam**

Students will be writing a final research paper that will be 20-25 double-spaced pages in length. This paper is a research paper on a topic related to the seminar readings (topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor). The idea here is to provide you with an opportunity to apply what you have read in the course to a substantive research problem.

**Weekly participation in class discussions**

In-class discussion will be the primary mode of instruction for this course, and therefore it is vital that everyone participates. Participating means being an active conversation partner and engaging with other students. Participation does not mean dominating the conversation, trying to impress the professor or one’s fellow students with how much you know, or even criticizing the readings or ideas that come up in conversation. Asking questions is a more desirable mode of participation than answering them. Asking good questions that open up lines of inquiry will contribute more to the conversation than providing good answers or merely dissecting a reading’s faults and limitations. Criticizing a reading is useful but easy. The more productive but difficult work is intellectually engaging with a reading. Being completely confused about a reading is fine (and candor about such matters is encouraged) so long as you own up to it so that others in the seminar can benefit from the opportunity to test their own understanding of what a reading is about.

**Discussion question papers for assigned readings**

Discussion question papers are assigned to provide short and long term benefits to all students taking the course. Each week, students will be assigned to write up a brief (1 page, single spaced) paper that centers on a question I give you. These papers require you to integrate and synthesize the readings from the course. The idea here is to provide you with an opportunity to develop your own perspectives about the theories, research designs, and topics covered in class. These papers are also useful preparation for comprehensive exams. These papers are due in class in hardcopy form.

**Formatting Instructions and Rules for the weekly discussion question papers:**

- 1 page (fill the page with one or two lines of wiggle room only – i.e. don’t give me two-thirds of a page). If anything you should run out of space and have to edit accordingly. Don’t go over the limit – be sure I can print out everything you write on one single sheet of paper.
- The essay should be single spaced
- 1 inch margins on all sides
- Use 12 point font – New Times Roman
- The Title of essay is the question I assign
- Put your name in the header
- Do NOT double space your header
- This is not a reaction paper or an opinion paper. Answer the question according to what the readings say; always support your own arguments about what the readings are saying with the logic and statements of the assigned readings. You don’t need to give me the full citations in a bibliography or reference list for these weekly assignments, but when discussing the various authors use in-text and parenthetical citations as in the example below. Always provide the page number if quoting directly from an author.
The method of science is often confused with its content (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2008). Goldberg (1963) argues that science is empirical but clarifies that it is not empiricism.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Obviously, the readings and paper listed for each date are to be completed by that class day.

Guidelines for Research Design Paper

You are required to write a paper presenting a research project of your own choice (must be approved). A hardcopy solid draft of this paper is due in class on our last regular class meeting of the semester. The final drafts are due in my Political Science mailbox no later than 4:00pm on 5/7. Late solid drafts will not be graded, and your final draft will then not have the benefit of my suggested revisions. You’ll also be dropped a letter grade for not turning in a draft. For the final papers, a 1/3 letter grade penalty per weekday will be imposed on all late papers. Thus, a final paper worth an A- that was turned in one day late would become a B+, then a B, then B- etc. Extensions without penalty will only be given when DIRE circumstances prevail.

Formatting

- 11-12 point font and 1 inch margins,
- Use a standard font (such as New Times Roman)
- LASER printed on one side only of 8.5” X 11” white paper
  - Organized using section headings
  - Employ gender-neutral/inclusive language
- Follow the APSA style of internal citations (copy of manual provided to you)
- Double spaced (except for abstract, hypotheses, references, and footnotes)
  - Contain page numbers throughout.
- Stapled – don’t put it in some fancy paper cover

Organization

Your paper should (roughly) follow the outline that appears below:

i. Title Page (no set style)
ii. Abstract (150-500 words, single spaced)
I. Introduction
   a. Research Question
   b. Literature Review
II. Theory and Hypotheses
   a. Analytical Framework/Theory
   b. Hypotheses
III. Data and Methods
   a. Measurement Operations
   b. Testing
IV. Conclusion
V. Works Cited (APSA Citation Style)

Substantive Components
1. **Research Question**: You must first formulate an *original* question of interest. Covering time-worn ground is not acceptable. Pay particular attention to why others ought to be interested in your research, and what new and innovative questions you are going to address that others have failed to analyze or have done so poorly. In other words, sell the importance and uniqueness of your proposal/question to the reader. Ask yourself the following:

1. Has this already been done?
2. Is this an important question?
3. What would we better understand if we knew the answer to the question?
4. Would answering this question contribute to the cumulative body of scientific knowledge?
5. Will your proposed analysis actually answer the question you are posing?

2. **Literature Review**: Present a brief, analytical summary of the major schools of thought or approaches to the problem. Be certain to locate specific authors in the spectrum of thought. The purpose here is not to present an encyclopedic or exhaustive survey. The literature should instead be reviewed in a way that sets up what you want to do. Prepare this section with an eye toward identifying unaddressed questions, unresolved controversies, and problems with previous research that may have led to biased, invalid, or inconclusive findings. Thus, this should once again lead you toward justifying why your research proposal is of such importance and what you will do to address the deficiencies found in the extant literature.

3. **Theory/Analytical Framework**: Some research framework (a model, theory, or logically interconnected set of hypotheses) should be developed and presented. This need not be a full-scale exposition of judicial behavior or systemic causes of war, for example, but you must highlight the major tenets of the theory from which you will derive your hypotheses. This might be an original theory based on the work of others, one that has sufficient precedent in the literature, or one that has already been largely developed and tested and accepted, but which you are going to test in a new and useful manner. If you are going to be testing someone else’s theory, you must be able to demonstrate why your tests are going to reveal something that had not been considered before, or how it will shed new light on an old subject. Note that if you are using a formal approach, you must explicitly state your assumptions and specify the deductions.

4. **Hypotheses**: From your theory, you must derive several hypotheses, or predictions, that will allow you to test some version of your theory. Each hypothesis should be indented in the text, single spaced, and formally starred and numbered, as in the following example:

   \[ H_1: \text{The faster the rate of change in the modernization process within any given society (} X_1, \text{) the higher the level of political instability within that society (} Y). \]

5. **Measurement Operations**: In this section you should explain how you will go about operationalizing or measuring the concepts contained in your hypotheses. Your discussion should address the following questions:

   How will you convert the hypotheses into concrete and readily testable terms and relationships?
   What sorts of information will you use to measure the constructs in your hypotheses?
   When and how will you acquire this information?

   You may find it useful to prepare a table that specifies the measurement rules and data sources. (Any such table or figure should be inserted directly into the text of the paper.) Consider the following example.
### Table 1: Operational Definitions, Descriptive Statistics, and Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Operational Definition</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus of News Story (Y)</strong></td>
<td>1=Strategy</td>
<td>Content analysis of each newspaper story; Kappa=.88</td>
<td>Range 1,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2=Issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3=Candidate Traits</td>
<td></td>
<td>Std Dev 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4=Adwatch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5=Horserace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income (X₁)</strong></td>
<td>Median income in market area divided by 1000.</td>
<td>2004 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook 2000 U.S. Census</td>
<td>Range 20,63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Std Dev 6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Young Audiences in Market (X₂)</strong></td>
<td>Percent of market ages 20-44.</td>
<td>2004 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook 2000 U.S. Census</td>
<td>Range 28.7,51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Std Dev 4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% Female in Market (X₃)</strong></td>
<td>% of Females in market.</td>
<td>2004 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook 2000 U.S. Census</td>
<td>Range 42.1,52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Std Dev .985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circulation (X₄)</strong></td>
<td>Circulation numbers</td>
<td>2004 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook</td>
<td>Range 7.87, 13.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 11.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Std Dev 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State (X₅)</strong></td>
<td>Colorado=1</td>
<td>News Content</td>
<td>Range 0,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington=0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean .469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Std Dev .499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Election Week (X₆)</strong></td>
<td>Number of weeks into the Election</td>
<td>News Content</td>
<td>Range 1,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean 6.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Std Dev 2.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Testing:** You need to explain how you will go about conducting your analysis and testing your hypotheses. Note that it is understood that you may be relatively unfamiliar with econometric specifications and other advance quantitative techniques. What is expected is that you mention the technique that you believe is appropriate (e.g. cross-sectional, linear regression, time-series, logit or probit, etc.), identify the unit(s) of analysis, justify case selection, and specify the time-range of the study. Consultation with the professor is highly recommended before writing this section.

7. **Conclusion:** In the conclusion you need to sell the importance of your anticipated findings. Some questions to ponder:

   - What do you expect to find?
   - What will your potential findings mean for political science and the real world?
   - Will you contribute toward theory building?
   - Will you discover some knowledge that is previously unknown and/or that may conceivably be put to use by policy makers or political practitioners?
   - Why are we better off for having learned what you expect to find?

8. **Works Cited:** This listing should appear at the very end of your paper. Note that all sources cited in the text of your paper must appear in this section. Do not include any source that is not explicitly
cited in your paper. Each entry should be single-spaced and indented after the first line, with one space between entries. Be sure to follow the APSA Style Guide.

Citation and Academic Honesty

LSU’s policy on plagiarism is the following: “Plagiarism is defined to include any use of another’s work and submitting that work as one’s own. This means not only copying passages of writing or direct quotations but also paraphrasing or using structure or ideas without citation.” Most of the work you will do for this class will require you to deal closely with books and articles assigned for this class; some projects may require you to do additional research. In either case, the rule of thumb is this: If you use material from a source (either one assigned from this class or something you’ve retrieved through outside research), you must cite it. Please review the University’s excellent guidelines on plagiarism and academic integrity at http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/ and http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/Plagiarism.htm.

Please note: If I even suspect plagiarism I am required by university policy to turn in the assignment to the dean of the graduate school. This means it is beyond my control what happens from that point forward. So – PLEASE ask any questions if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism (it often happens unintentionally). Please make EVERY effort to avoid putting me in the terrible position of turning your work in to the dean of students.

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me at the beginning of the quarter to discuss any such accommodations for this course. In order to have any accommodations met, you must be registered with the LSU Office of Disabilities Services. More information on registering and accommodation is available on the ODS website: http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ods.nsf/index
Class Schedule

1/15 Course overview and Introduction

1/22 Overview of the Field and History of Political Communication


For further reading


1/29 Normative Perspectives on Political Communication


For further reading


### 2/5 Understanding News Exposure


*For further reading*


**2/12 Consequences of News Exposure and Nonexposure**


For further reading


2/19 Making News


For further reading


2/26 Economics of News Production


For further reading


3/5 News Autonomy


For further reading


3/12 News Bias


For further reading


3/19 Cross-National Perspectives on Political Communication


For further reading

Nisbet, Erik C., and Teresa A. Myers. Forthcoming. Anti-American sentiment as a media effect? Arab media, political identity, and public opinion in the Middle East. *Communication Research*. (LSUS)


3/26 The Early Trajectory of Media Effects Research


For further reading


4/2 Media Effects Research since the 1970s


*For further reading*


4/9 Selective Exposure Research


*For further reading*


**4/16 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

**4/23 Current Perspectives on the New Media System**


For further reading


4/30 The Future of Political Communication


For further reading


Audio recording of The future of political communication research: Where we’ve been, where we’re going. Roundtable discussion at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington, DC, Aug. Sep. 1–4, 2005.

5/7 Final papers due in my Political Science mailbox no later than 4:00pm