



Lakehead University  
POLI 2410 FA – Mass Media and Politics (Fall 2019)  
MW 4:00-5:30 – RC 1001

Instructor: Mr. Adam Schenk  
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Office Hours: By appointment only

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

In 2019 we are virtually bombarded by news and information every time we unlock our phones or open our Facebook homepage. Our media sources have expanded exponentially, with traditional journalists being joined by growing numbers of independent bloggers and podcasters, all voicing their thoughts and opinions with wide-ranging levels of accuracy. Depending which of these sources you read, the latest political controversy may be a catastrophic disaster or an overblown distraction manipulated by partisan politicians. In this course we will explore how information and opinion is developed, manipulated, and transmitted by the media and consumed by the public, specifically in the realm of political discourse and ideology. We will focus particularly on the Canadian experience, while also exploring the influence of mass media and politics in the United States and abroad, and consider how the relationship between media and politics has changed, and will continue to change, due to ever-increasing advances in technology.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

#### Required Texts:

1. Nesbitt-Larking, Paul, *Politics, Society and Media*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2007).
2. Lalancette, Mireille, Vincent Reynauld and Erin Crandall, eds., *What's Trending in Canadian Politics?* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019).

You are expected to bring copies of both texts with you to all classes

#### Grading

- Midterm Exam 10%
- Initial Paper 10%
- Presentation 15%
- Final Paper 40%
- Final Exam 25%

## Midterm Exam and Final Exam

Both the midterm exam and the final exam will consist of some combination of true/false, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank and/or short answer questions. The midterm exam will cover all class content since the beginning of the semester, including assigned readings and class lectures. The final exam will cover all class content covered over the entire semester. The final class before each exam will be set aside for review; while I may make some general comments on how to focus your studying and prepare for these tests, these classes will primarily be set aside for you to ask questions; if there are particular topics or areas that you would like to have reviewed leading up to either exam you can feel free to communicate these to me ahead of time. In the event that one of our regular classes needs to be cancelled for whatever reason, however, these review classes may need to be utilized in order to catch up on a missed lecture; in the event that this happens I'll provide an alternative opportunity for review.

## Presentation

Your presentation will require you to undergo discourse analysis of a particular piece of Canadian media content in which you're interested. Direction and guidance on how to undergo discourse analysis will be covered in our lecture on October 7. In a nutshell you will be tasked with identifying and assessing underlying biases and presumptions in the content you've chosen to analyze, whether it is audio, visual or written. Your presentation must be between four and six minutes; this is a wide, **non-flexible** time range and marks will be deducted for falling outside of this time range. You are welcome to use a silent timer to help you keep track of time on your watch, cellphone etc. After your presentation is complete you may be asked to respond to a question or two from the class and/or myself (the time for responding to questions isn't included in the time period).

You must share your particular content with the rest of the class by uploading, or providing a link to, your chosen content on our course website not less than one week before your presentation date (for instance, if you are scheduled to present on November 25, you need to have your content available on the course site not later than 4:00 p.m. on November 18). Everyone in class is expected to take a look at your content on the course site ahead of your presentation date in lieu of course readings for those classes.

You will be assessed on a) the quality of the analysis you present, b) your preparedness and presentation skills, c) your answers to questions, and d) your ability to abide by the other presentation requirements such as posting your content ahead of your presentation in a timely manner and staying within the time range for your presentation. Excellent presentations require practice and need to balance being structured and organized speaking off the cuff; you shouldn't be rambling loosely, nor should you be reading directly from your notes for the entirety of the presentation.

A sign-up sheet will be distributed at the end of class on September 9; you will have to sign up for either November 25, November 27, or December 2, but depending on how long questions and transitions between presentations take some presentations may end up being bumped to the subsequent class.

## Initial Paper and Final Paper

Before exploring the specific requirements of each paper I would like to note my general expectations for both papers:

- Both of your papers are formal, academic essays, which means that each must have as its foundation a persuasive thesis statement wherein you establish a meaningful and insightful position which you support throughout the body of your essay. *If I have difficulty readily identifying your thesis statement when I read your introduction then there is a major problem!*

- Both papers have wide ranges for expected word counts; these ranges are **non-flexible** and if your paper is outside the word limit there may be serious deductions to your grade.
- Regarding formatting and citations, while I prefer papers written in accordance with the Turabian style, I am flexible so long as your formatting is clear, consistent, and thorough. I do, however, expect the following: 1) a formal, standalone title page, 2) footnotes as opposed to endnotes, and 3) a complete bibliography.
- I am very happy to discuss a potential thesis statement, paper outline, or rough draft with you, either over email or in person.
- Papers are to be submitted via email to me (awschenk@lakeheadu.ca) in **PDF form only**. If your paper is not submitted in this format it will be deemed to have not been submitted.
- Regarding late submissions, unless there is a legitimate medical or personal emergency that prevents you from submitting a paper, assignments that are not submitted **by the date and time assigned and in the proper format will receive a grade of 0**. There is no sliding scale of percentage points that you will lose if it is late by a certain amount of days.
- For complete clarity, if your paper is emailed to me in a format other than PDF, the grade for this paper would be 0. If you email me your paper 5 minutes after the deadline, the grade for this paper would be 0.

Your initial paper will require you to identify a political crisis and argue whether or not those implicated in the crisis were effective, or ineffective, in addressing the crisis publicly and minimizing negative perception of the crisis. Your analysis could also address whether or not their efforts were supported or hindered by others via mass media (for instance, how did journalists assess the response to the crisis?). An example topic (which you now can't use!) could be the handling of the SNC Lavalin scandal by Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberal party. This paper must be between **1200-1600 words**, not including footnotes, title page, bibliography etc. You must cite at least two primary sources from mass media (for instance, a CBC news article on the incident, a Tweet regarding the crisis etc.) and at least two secondary academic sources in this paper (not including our course texts). Your initial paper will be due **before 4:00 p.m. on October 21**.

Your final paper will require you to view and analyze a political documentary (you can feel free to double-check whether your particular selection is accurately considered a "political documentary" but I will be defining this term relatively loosely). You have a wide range of freedom in choosing how to analyze the documentary and ultimately what you will argue regarding the documentary in your essay, but remember that you are *not writing a simple movie review, but a persuasive academic essay*. This paper must be between **2300-2600 words**, not including footnotes, title page, bibliography etc. You must cite at least five secondary academic sources in this paper (not including our course texts). Your final paper will be due **before 4:00 p.m. on December 4**.

### General Class Expectations

While there are no marks for attendance or participation and this is a lecture-based class, the semester will be a more enjoyable and beneficial for everyone if we come to class prepared and ready to ask questions and engage in discussion from time to time. This is a very current and relevant topic that provides a great opportunity for interesting analysis and debate.

### Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policy in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

***Plagiarism involves presenting another's work, ideas, theories, or interpretation as one's own.***

To avoid plagiarism, writers should always:

1. Put quotation marks around any words from sources
2. Paraphrase material completely; changing (with the help of a thesaurus) or rearranging a few words or the tense of a verb is not paraphrasing.
3. Give accurate and complete citations for all material including paraphrased material.
4. Avoid borrowing entire arguments or approaches to a subject from another writer. Make it 'original' while staying faithful to the assignment parameters.

### A Quick Word on Emails

I am very happy to answer questions over email, but there are parameters to the way in which these emails should be written and sent. I expect that before you ask me a question you have consulted the course outline to see if the answer is there. I also expect that your emails to me are written with *proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation*. If I receive an email that has the appearance of a hastily typed text message, you should not expect an email in reply.

### Disability Accommodations

Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities and/or medical conditions to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, please contact Student Accessibility Services <http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca> (SC0003, 343-8047 or [sas@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:sas@lakeheadu.ca))

Readings are from the assigned text unless otherwise noted. The course schedule and assigned readings are potentially subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Date	Topic	Assigned Readings
September 4	Course Overview and Syllabus Review	N/A
September 9	Clarifying Terms and Early Communication in Canada	Chp. 2, <i>Politics Society and Media (PSM)</i> , 29-48
September 11	Canadian Broadcasting: Past, Present and Future	Chp. 3, <i>PSM</i> , 49-74
September 16	Culture, Ideology and the Media	Chp. 4, <i>PSM</i> , 75-98
September 18	The Political Economy of Communications in Canada	Chp. 5, <i>PSM</i> , 99-124
September 23	When News Meets the Law: Regulation of the Media	Chp. 6, <i>PSM</i> , 125-149
September 25	Micropolitics Within the Media	Chp. 7, <i>PSM</i> , 151-182
September 30	Musings on Technology	Chp. 8, <i>PSM</i> , 183-203
October 2	Mass Consumption, Mass Confusion? The Growth of Audiences via Electronics	Chp 9, <i>PSM</i> , 205-230
October 7	*Political Deconstruction of Media Content (Details re. Presentations during Class)*	Chp. 10, <i>PSM</i> , 231-258
October 9	The Impact of the Media on Audience Beliefs – Part 1	Chps. 11 and 12, <i>PSM</i> , 259-301
<b>October 14 – Thanksgiving, No Class</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>October 16 – Reading Week, No Class</b>	N/A	N/A
October 21 <b>Paper Due</b>	The Impact of the Media on Audience Beliefs – Part 2	Chps. 12 and 13, <i>PSM</i> , 301-348
October 23	The Media, the Public, and Social Responsibility	Chp. 14, <i>PSM</i> , 349-374; Chp. 12, <i>What's Trending in Canadian Politics? (WTCP?)</i> , 257-275
October 28	Midterm Review	N/A
October 30	<b>MIDTERM</b>	N/A
November 4	Environmental Activism and the Internet	Chps. 1 and 3, <i>WTCP?</i> , 25-43; 63-85
November 6	Youth, Social Media and Politics	Chps. 2 and 4, <i>WTCP?</i> , 44-62; 86-105
November 11	Memes, Tweets and Politicians	Chps. 5 and 8, <i>WTCP?</i> , 106-126; 170-193
November 13	Campaigning and Polling in the Digital Age	Chps. 7, 9 and 10, <i>WTCP?</i> ; 149-169; 194-236
November 18	Social Media's Impact on Legal Discourse	Chp. 11, <i>WTCP?</i> , 237-256
November 20	Social Unrest and Social Media; Concluding Thoughts on Future Trends	Chp. 6 and Conclusion, <i>WTCP?</i> , 127-148; 276-298
November 25	Class Presentations	Discourse Analysis Content on Our Course Site
November 27	Class Presentations	Discourse Analysis Content on Our Course Site
December 2	Class Presentations	Discourse Analysis Content on Our Course Site
December 4	Course Review	N/A