

Presidents and the Press

JRSM 4720/6720-001

Spring 2024

Class meeting: TR 11:20 a.m.-12:45 p.m.

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

Conflict and symbiosis between the White House and the news media; studies of history, journalism, and politics; how various presidents used or failed to use the media, how they were covered and represented, and how that relationship has changed over the years.

Prerequisites

None.

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

David Greenberg, *Republic of Spin: An Inside History of the American Presidency* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2016). Paperback. ISBN: 978-0393-35364-8. *One copy of this book is available on three-hour reserve in McWherter Library.

Classroom format

This seminar is a three-credit-hour course exploring the relationship between American presidents and the news media. Through discussion as well as lecture it combines the studies of history, journalism and politics. The approach used is primarily chronological, but we will pay particular attention to a number of key, recurring themes. These motifs are important lenses through which to view presidential-press relations, and they are especially appropriate considering the evolving, dynamic nature of the topic. For the office of the presidency has changed greatly over the last two centuries. So, too, of course have America's media and political systems.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://elearn.memphis.edu>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JRSM 4720 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Course Requirements

Undergraduate students will take two tests (a midterm and a final exam) covering class notes and assigned readings.

They will also prepare a 3- to 5-page advisory report counseling the current president on how to deal with the press effectively and how better to communicate with the public. It is a practical professional assignment, involving argumentation more than investigation, strategy rather than scholarship. It will be part of the final exam.

In this course participation is measured in three ways: occasional quizzes, social media posts, and classroom discussion. The last is especially important. In a seminar your contributions are essential. Please be prepared to make comments and ask questions regularly. Your classmates and I depend on you.

Repetition of Courses and Coursework

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the resume and logo).

Grading

At the end of the semester, your class average will be calculated and fractions will be rounded to the nearest whole number. Letter grades will be determined according to the scale below.

Midterm:	40 points
Final exam:	40 points
Participation:	20 points
Total	100 points

Honors

Any student taking this class for honors credit (section 350) must verify this with the instructor by the end of the second week of class and arrange an honors assignment.

Graduate Students

Graduate students will be required to write a 10-page research paper comparing the media relations of two American presidents and present their findings to the class. The paper should include a wide variety of both primary and secondary sources.

Paper:	30 points
Midterm:	30 points
Final:	30 points
<u>Participation:</u>	<u>10 points</u>
Total	100 points

Presidents

“All men are created equal,” announced the Declaration of Independence in 1776, yet that idealistic tenet clearly does not apply to the individuals who have been president of the United States. Some were greater than others, some more consequential or more memorable. In this course we will accordingly focus on these more “newsworthy” individuals, examining how they used (or failed to use) the media and how in turn they were covered by the media. Examining their administrations can highlight both the conflict and the symbiosis between the White House and the Fourth Estate. This group includes the following:

The Revolutionaries: Washington, Adams, Jefferson

The Commoners: Jackson, Lincoln

The Executives: T. Roosevelt, Wilson, F. Roosevelt

The Warriors: Johnson, Nixon

The Imagists: Kennedy, Reagan

The Internet Presidents: Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump

Themes

1. **War.** Censorship, propaganda, patriotism, professionalism
2. **Management.** The “imperial presidency.”
3. **Ideology.** The objectivity ethos: Most American journalists say they still subscribe to this approach. Are there benefits to it?
4. **Partisanship.** Is the press inherently right, left, both or neither?
5. **“The New Politics.”** Is it true that there are new rules, new players, and a new game involved in running for office?
6. **Campaign advertising.**
7. **Insider v. Outsider.** Should journalists covering powerful people strive to be confidants or critics?
8. **Technology.** How have presidents used technology to communicate with the public?
9. **Public Participation.** Are ordinary citizens better able to influence politicians and the press today than they were in the past?
10. **Entertainment and politics.** Are actors, comedians, musicians and talk show hosts (and not journalists) the real media power brokers in 21st-century politics?
11. **[Your ideas here].** What do you think is important?

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a basic schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. Although every effort will be made to stick with this schedule, please understand that some material may require more or less discussion and class time. Thus, changes to the schedule may occur. All changes will be announced in class.

Week 1, Jan. 16-18: Introduction, Washington, Adams, Jefferson

Readings: Introduction

Week 2, Jan. 23-25: Jackson

Week 3, Jan. 30 – Feb. 1: Lincoln

Week 4, Feb. 6-8: T. Roosevelt

Readings: Chapters 1-6

Week 5, Feb. 13-15: Wilson

Readings: Chapters 7-12

Week 6, Feb. 20-22: F. Roosevelt

Readings: Chapter 19-27

Week 7, Feb. 27-29

Review and Midterm test

Week 8, March 5-7

SPRING BREAK (no classes)

Week 9, March 12-14: Kennedy

Readings: Chapters 36-41

Extra Credit opportunity: Norm Brewer Lecture by **Josh Dawsey**, *Washington Post* (Wed., March 13, 6:00 p.m. in UC Ballroom A)

Week 10, March 19-21: Johnson

Readings: Chapters 42-44

Week 11, March 26-28: Nixon

Readings: Chapters 13-18, 45

Week 12, April 2-4: Reagan

Readings: Chapter 46

Week 13, April 9-11: Clinton and Bush

Readings: Chapters 47-49

Week 14, April 16-18: Obama, Trump, and Biden

Week 14, April 23: Review for Final

Final: Thursday, May 2, 8-10 a.m.

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Professional Values and Competencies in JRSM 4720

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, both in a global context and in the United States.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and

institutions in shaping communications.

- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

How professional values and competencies will be met

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)

- Recognize the role of media in influencing the political and cultural dynamics on the global stage.
- Develop a strong historical sense of how mass communication technologies originated and developed.
- Understand the variety of relationships between media and their audiences, including diverse audiences.
- Be sensitive to the needs of diverse and under-represented groups in programming and creating messages.
- Understand the ongoing government regulation of the U.S. media as well as the constitutional principles that guide it.
- Recognize the ethical and philosophical issues that arise in media culture and understand the range of viewpoints regarding these issues.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)

- Ability to recount presidential administrations, their accomplishments, failings and challenges.
- Ability to relate major episodes in media history involving noteworthy confrontations or collaboration between presidents and the media.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Awareness of historical and political science concepts in the media.

Understanding

- Understand the behind-the-scenes operations and decision-making processes of major mass communication industries.
- Understand how new technology affects the media and communication.
- Understand the allied fields of advertising and public relations and their relationship to media systems.
- Understand mass communication theories and their application to media professions.

Application

- Students will write a research paper on a topic or issue raised in the course.
- Students will write and present a report providing media-relations advice for the current president.
- In addition to the other requirements, graduate students will write three book reviews/précis or write a research paper.

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

AI/Chat GPT

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. Substantially reworking the original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

Academic integrity

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

In addition to University-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own, as acts of cheating and punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

Online SETEs

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the "Student Pages" dropdown menu and select "My Resources" and find the SETE evaluation forms; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Diversity and inclusivity

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

Weather policy

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather.

Student support

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.