PPP 412

Political Communications in International Perspective

Fall 1999
Monday/Wednesdays 11.30-1.00 Littauer 332
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Course Objectives:

Globalization and new technologies are rapidly transforming the process of political communications around the world. The end of the Television Age and the rise of the Internet Era raises many issues: are newspapers and television as we know them in terminal decline, as some expect, or will the Internet just supplement, not replace, the old media? Are parties and elections being transformed by new forms of campaign communications? What are the effects of newspapers, television, the Net and party campaigns on civic engagement? Are the new communication technologies producing a ‘globalization’ or ‘Americanization’ of popular culture, or a more complex localization and fragmentation of media outlets and local identities? And what are the consequences of all these developments for the process of governance in a wired world?

This course will provide new insights and practical analysis to understand these issues focusing on recent developments in the structure, contents and impact of political communications in many countries around the world. A wide range of post-industrial and developing countries are compared, including the United States. Your policy analysis report focuses on one of issues covered in the course in the country(s)/region of your choice.

Much of the material will be drawn from a new book, *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Democracies*, (currently in press), as well as from online resources and web sites. Class notes, exercises and online links will be available on the class web site.

Course Outline:

Part I starts by considering key issues and theories about the role of the news media in a democracy, examining two issues: what normative standards can be used to evaluate the news media? And how is the news industry - including newspapers, radio/television and the Internet - being transformed in the late twentieth century by economic and technological pressures?

Part II compares political communications within election campaigns, and how the shift from traditional to modern, and now post-modern, campaigning has altered the relationship between citizens and candidates/parties.

Part III analyzes the impact of political communications on civic engagement, meaning the public’s political knowledge, trust and participation. Does the news media produce civic malaise, as many claim, or do they serve to boost civic engagement?

Part IV concludes by considering the process of globalization and the dynamics of international news flows. Are we moving towards a global hegemony dominated by American culture, or a ‘localization’ and fragmentation of media outlets and cultural identities?

Schedule Fall 1999

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Note: Holidays: Columbus Day 11th October, Veteran’s Day 11th November, Thanksgiving 25-28th November. * = Report due for completion
Who Should Take this Course?

The course is designed for policy analysts working in the news media, politics and public policymaking. It provides analytical skills and practical knowledge useful in a wide range of careers, including in international organizations like the U.N. and UNESCO, NGOs, interest groups, and community associations, government agencies, ministries, and press offices, political and campaign organizations, as well as for those directly involved with the news media as journalists, broadcasters, pollsters, campaign consultants, media executives, and press officers. There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Materials:

Course materials are: (*=available from the Coop)

- Pippa Norris. *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Democracies.* Manuscript. Bound copies are available from CMDO and can be downloaded. From http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/people/pnorris/mediated.htm

Guest Speakers

Guest speakers will be invited to class, including faculty and visiting fellows from the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. Details will be announced nearer the date.

You are also welcome to attend visiting speakers in the Research Roundtable series organized by the Center every Monday from 4.00-5.30pm in Taubman 275.

In addition you are welcome to come to the Shorenstein Center Brown Bag talks every Tuesday 12.00-1.00 where a series of journalists, broadcasters and scholars will present their views.
Course Requirements:

Sessions involve participation through discussing the reading, group exercises, report presentations, and case studies. Online independent research is required for your reports. Familiarity with statistical analysis and working with large-scale datasets will be an advantage although not essential.

Course assessment is based on a Content Analysis Exercise (10%), a mid-term Policy Analysis Report (40%), a final Policy Strategy Report (40%), and class participation (10%). The two reports are designed as interrelated and cumulative exercises. The Policy Analysis Report (due in the 7th week) focuses on one of the problems of communications. The Policy Strategy Report (due the end week) builds on this foundation by proposing structural reforms based on your analysis.

#1. Content Analysis Exercise (10%)

The aim is to learn the pros and cons of this method.

"Campaign coverage neglects serious discussion of policy issues and focuses instead on the strategic horse-race, negative news and personalities."

Selecting any two different media outlets (such as television network news, local or cable news, newspapers, magazines, or the internet) you are asked to develop a systematic content analysis to examine how far this is the case, and explain the pattern of coverage which you find.

The content analysis should include three days coverage measuring the amount of campaign news, the headline priority, the sources used as ‘authorities’, the type of topics covered, the ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ direction, and the ‘framing’ of such news. Your 3-page content analysis paper should present:

- Your hypotheses based on your reading;
- Your methodology including conceptual definitions and operationalization;
- Your findings; and,
- The main methodological problems and issues raised by this exercise.

More details of this exercise will follow. The results will be compared in class. Link to online news media sources from the AJR.

#2. Part I: Policy Analysis Report (40%)

In the first part of this exercise you will be asked to produce a Policy Analysis report for your client.

Full details are available for downloading here. Examples of the sort of topics you might want to select are as follows:

(Client: Greenpeace). How is the Internet used most effectively by environmental NGOs in Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam, and how could Greenpeace fund local initiatives to promote this activity?

(Client: Boston Globe). Why have American newspaper sales declined so heavily in recent decades, and what could be learnt from sales in Germany, Britain and Sweden to expand the Boston market to attract more women, minority and the younger readers?

(Client: Markle Foundation). What are the pros and cons of introducing online voting and how could this be implemented to maximize participation?
(Client: European Parliament Press Office). Voting participation in elections to the European parliament has declined from three-quarters to one half the electorate in the last twenty years. What could the press office of the European Parliament do to change communications to reverse this pattern in the run up to the next European elections in 2004?

(Client: UNESCO Division of Women). UNESCO is concerned that women are not being portrayed as effective political leaders, experts and authorities in the news media. Is this the case and, if so, what could the news industry do to change this situation? Compare news coverage of women in politics in Sweden, the US and France to analyze what could be done about this issue.

(Client: Department of Education, Greece). The Greek government is concerned that their country is falling well behind the information society in the European Union, especially in Internet use. Is this the case and, if so, what training initiatives within the educational system would be most effective to improve access?

(Client: CNN). CNN is concerned about how it should cover the 2000 party conventions. What are the lessons of coverage in 1992 and 1996 that could be used to provide guidelines for CNN producers, editors, reporters and news executives?

(Client: Ford Foundation). Ford is concerned that local TV news in the US fails to cover local politics, thereby discouraging learning about local and state government. Is this the case and, if so, what recommendations and incentives could be developed to improve coverage by local TV stations?

(Client: Mexican Electoral Commission). IFE seeks to provide parties with finding and facilities for political communications during the upcoming Presidential elections. How can these resources be used most effectively to promote free and fair elections among all parties and what are the major problems facing IFE in this regard?

(Client: British Conservative Party). The Conservative party is concerned that party political broadcasts (PPBs) in the 1997 election were ineffective and the party needs a radical rethink to strategic communications in the run up to the 2001/2 general election. In the light of the 1997 PPBs what recommendations would you make?

(Client: Index on Censorship). The Index on Censorship wants to monitor problems of the free flow of information in the press during the last 12 months in Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran or Kosovo. How would you analyze this issue for your client?

(Client: Pew Trust). Pew is concerned that trust in the news media is declining in the US and many countries. Is this the case and what causes trust in the news media?

#3 Final Policy Strategy Report (40%) In the final part of this exercise you will be asked to provide a Policy Strategy report with a set of recommendations for your client.

#4. Class Participation (10%)

Class discussions, exercises, guest lecturers, video and newspaper content analysis, and independent policy analysis papers will all be used in this class. All are expected to participate fully in discussions and exercises.
Weekly Essential Reading

Week 1. Part I: The News Media & Democracy


Week 2. The Decline of Newspapers?

- [UNESCO World Communications Report](http://www.unesco.org/). 1998. Online for downloading. Note this is a long report and you might want to download chapters or sections. Chapter 8.
- Pippa Norris. *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Democracies*. Manuscript. Bound copies are available from CMDO and available for downloading. [http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/people/pnorris/mediated.htm](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/people/pnorris/mediated.htm) Chapter 4
- Denis McQuail and Karen Siune (eds.) *Media Policy* Sage: 1998 0761959408 Chapter 2

Week 3. The Rise (and Fall?) of Television

- [UNESCO World Communications Report](http://www.unesco.org/). 1998. Online for downloading. Note this is a long report and you might want to download chapters or sections. Chapter 11.
- Denis McQuail and Karen Siune (eds.) *Media Policy* Sage: 1998 0761959408 Chapter 3

Week 4. The Emerging Internet Age?

- [UNESCO World Communications Report](http://www.unesco.org/). 1998. Online for downloading. Note this is a long report and you might want to download chapters or sections. Chapter 1 and 13.
- [Political Communication Section Papers](http://www.politicalscience.org/) on the Internet APSA Annual Meeting Atlanta September 1999 available online.
Week 5. Policy Analysis Research Design


Week 6. Part II: From Traditional to Post-Modern Campaigns?


Week 7. Campaign Case Studies

- Roderick Hart “The Unheralded Functions of Campaign News” APSA Annual Meeting Atlanta September 1999 online.

Week 8. Part III: The Impact on Civic Engagement

- Pippa Norris. *A Virtuous Circle: Political Communications in Post-Industrial Democracies*. Manuscript. Bound copies are available from CMDO and available for downloading. Chapter 9 and 10
Week 9. Political Trust

Week 10. Civic Participation
• [IDEA Voter Turnout 1945-1999: A Global Report Online](http://www.ideaonline.org/)

• [UNESCO World Communications Report](http://www.unesco.org/). 1998. Online for downloading. Note this is a long report and you might want to download chapters or sections. Chapter 5 and 12.
• [Freedom Review Survey of Press Freedom](http://www.freedomofthepress.org/)
• [Amnesty International Online](http://www.amnesty.org/)
• [Index of Censorship Online](http://www.indexoncensorship.org/)
• [Committee to Protect Journalists Online](http://www.cpj.org/)

Week 12. Does Globalization = Americanization?

Week 13. Policy Strategy Reports Part II Presentations
14. Conclusions
Supplementary Reading

The following is provided as a selected guide to some further reading for research. The aim is to point you towards some of the supplementary literature that is optional. You will find many other sources available in the Kennedy School Library and Widener/Hollis. Most listed books give detailed literature reviews in their bibliographies.

Part I: The News Media & Democracy

McQuail, D. and Siune, K. (1990) New Media Politics: Comparative Perspectives in Western Europe (London: Sage)
Part II: From Traditional to Post-Modern Campaigns


Part III: The Impact on Civil Engagement

Part IV: Globalization and International News Flows


Other Sources

In addition you may want to check some of the following journals:

Political Communication
Electoral Studies
The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics
Media Studies Journal
The International Journal of Public Opinion Research
British Journal of Political Science
American Political Science Review
European Journal of Communications
Gazette
Journalism Quarterly

Selected Web Reference Sources

Complete links
Television News Archive (Vandebilt)
Opinion Polls - Roper Center
Guides to online newspapers
BBC News
News Media Online (including links to associations, journals, online sources)
New York Times
Washington Post
CNN
World Bank Tables of Economic and Social Indicators 1950-93:
World Bank
International Labour Organization
Online Newspapers and Broadcasters: AJR Newslink
Freedom in the World: Freedom House
Turnout - IDEA Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
Electoral Systems around the World
Lijphart Election Archive
InterParliamentary Union
Transparency International - Index of Corruption
Index on Censorship
The CIA World Factbook
Political Parties of the World