

HI 385: Media, Politics, and Popular Culture in 20th Century U.S. History Online Spring 2017

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Source: "Cradle of Empire," PBS Online (adapted)



Course Description:

This class will take a detailed look at the relationship of media, politics, and popular culture over the course of the twentieth century in American history. During the semester, students will read primary and secondary sources that showcase different aspects of the media and popular culture—including newspapers, radio, film, television, music, and the internet—and how it has shaped the political terrain, influenced voter attitudes, impacted policy, and transformed electoral campaigns.

Objectives:

At end of course students will be able to:

- Identify the historical development in American political, cultural, economic, and social structures by examining primary and secondary sources.
- Analyze primary and secondary sources to explain about how and why these historical developments happened.
- Pursue original primary research about a specific topic in American history and synthesize primary and secondary materials to advance an original argument about the roots, shape, and implications of a historical moment.
- Interrogate modern media myths with an analysis of primary sources that will allow students to and go beyond popular narratives of history and understand a more complicated historical reality.
- Recognize the historical roots of contemporary political debates.
- Understand the relationships between politics, popular culture in ways that will allow students to navigate the contours of the mass media, entertainment, and the American political process more effectively.

Readings: All books can be purchased at the University Bookstore, Amazon or Folletts:

- *Muckraking: Three Landmark Articles*, Bedford/St. Martin, 1994. ISBN-13: 978-0312089443
- Bradford Martin. *The Theater is in the Street: The Politics of Performance in Sixties America*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2004. ISBN-13: 978-1558494589
- Steven Ross. *Hollywood Left and Right: How Movie Stars Shaped American Politics*. Oxford University Press, 2011, 2013. ISBN-13: 978-0199975532
- Gabriel Sherman, *The Loudest Voice in the Room: How Roger Ailes Built Fox News—and Divided a Country*. New York: Random House, 2014. ISBN-13: 978-0812992854

Other required readings will be available on **Blackboard** (check <http://blackboard.purdue.edu>). Sources available on Blackboard are designated on the syllabus with **

Format: There are ten “topics” of the course organized in three modules. During each topic, the class will consider and evaluate a “media” myth of American politics and popular culture that has developed over the course of the twentieth century. During each topic session, we will establish the historical context, present the dominant myth, and then critically analyze the reality behind the myth through an analysis of primary sources, scholarly readings, and lectures and discussion via Voicethread. In peer groups, students participate in a discussion on each topic to generate a conversation about the contemporary implications of the historical topic at hand. Students should regularly check their Purdue email and the course website for updated information on readings, upcoming discussion topics, paper instructions, study guides, and news items related to the course. Students are expected to spend time daily monitoring news coverage of contemporary political events, and I encourage you to post interesting media strategies and popular culture debates pertaining to American political life on the course Blackboard page during your forum discussion for each topic.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Module 1 Essay Exam (due February 13th at 9AM): 20%
- Module 2 Essay Exam (due April 3rd at 9AM): 20%
- Module 3 Essay Exam (due May 1st at 9AM): 20%
- Journal Responses: 20%
 - 2-page journal response submitted on Blackboard in response to a question for each topic. These journal responses are also designed to help you prepare for each of the module essay exams.
- Discussion Participation: 20%
 - Participation in peer discussion groups for each topic in Blackboard discussion forum
 - Original posts in response to the discussion question must be posted by Friday at 5PM.
 - Comments on at least 2 posts by your peers must be posted by Monday at 9AM.
 - Participation in lectures via Voicethread

NOTE: STUDENTS MUST COMPLETE ALL REQUIREMENTS TO PASS THE COURSE

Late policy: Late papers and late discussion comments will be penalized **one-third grade per day** (example: a B paper that is one day late becomes a B-). All students are required to keep copies of their graded essays until the end of the semester.

- In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes as necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Any necessary changes will be announced via email and/or Blackboard.
- During the last two weeks of the semester, you will be provided an opportunity to evaluate this course and my teaching. You will receive an official email from evaluation administrators with a link to the online evaluation site, and you will have two weeks to complete this evaluation. I consider your feedback vital, as does Purdue University. Your professors have access to these online evaluations only after grades are due.

Classroom Policies:

- Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class or via email, as circumstances allow.
- Email will be the preferred mode of contact. Please feel free to contact me directly (i.e., not via Blackboard's email option) at any point. I will also create a class email list which I will use to send course-related announcements as needed. **For this reason, I expect you to check your Purdue email account at least once a day.**
- This class is intended to encourage open, informed discussions and I hope to protect and foster a classroom atmosphere that will encourage respectful and enlightened discourse in the class. Ultimately I would hope that you take those ideas and informed discussions with you beyond the classroom. **Respect, open-mindedness and tolerance will be the standard for all classroom discussions.** I encourage you to ask questions you may have on this topic either in the class or during office hours.

Academic Integrity

- As a student in this class and at Purdue, you are expected to uphold the standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will be treated as such in this class. You are expected to produce your own work and to accurately cite all necessary materials.
- Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: the use of papers or books not authorized by the instructor during examinations, quizzes, and other written assignments; giving or receiving answers during or in preparation for examinations and quizzes; and failing to cite sources employed for writing assignments.
- Those who engage in such practices should expect to fail the course and have their behavior referred to the Dean of Students. This is non-negotiable: if I find that you have plagiarized, you will fail the course—period. Please do not put yourself in this situation.

Student with Disabilities:

- If you need any special accommodations to participate fully in class, please see me as soon as possible. I will keep all discussions confidential as long as the situation permits. Please note that, in order for Purdue University to accommodate your needs, you will need to provide appropriate written documentation and have it on file with Student Services. Students should be aware that Services for Student Disabilities are available at 494-1247 if you need further assistance

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Course Introduction

NOTE: When you log in to Blackboard, you will notice the link to Voicethread. Click on this to create an account if you do not already have one. When watching the lectures login to add your comments. It is imperative that you watch Voicethread lectures for each topic, and you are encouraged to post text or recorded comments to questions I will pose during the lectures and also to use this discussion to help formulate your journal response for that particular topic.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. HIST 385 Syllabus
2. Michael Schudson, "Introduction: News as Public Knowledge" in *Power of News* **

BLACKBOARD ASSIGNMENT:

1. Introduce yourself to your group

Module 1: The New World of Twentieth-Century Media and Politics

Week 2: "You provide the pictures and I'll provide the war..." News and Commerce in the early 20th century

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due Monday, January 23 at 9AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers' posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. *Muckracking: Three Landmark Articles*, introduction and one muckraking article (you select!)
2. Primary documents: News coverage of the Maine **

Week 3: "My Friends..." FDR and the Power of the Airwaves

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due Monday January 30th at 9 AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers' posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Lawrence Levine, *The People and the President*, introduction **
2. Derek Vaillant, "Your Voice Came in Last Night But IT seemed a Little Scared: Rural Radio Listening and 'Talking Back' During the Progressive Era in Wisconsin, 1920-1932," in Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio, eds., *Radio Reader*, pp. 63-88.**
3. Letters to FDR**

Week 4: “Are you now or have you ever been a Communist?” Hollywood, Anticommunism and the Evolution of Censorship

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due Monday February 6th at 9 AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers’ posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Steven Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right*, pp.3-163
2. Primary Documents on Movie Censorship **

Week 5: Module 1 Essay Exam Due February 13th at 9AM

Module 2: Politics in the Age of Network Television

Week 6: The Nixon Shadow versus the Kennedy Tan: The 1960 Television Debates

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due Monday February 20th at 9 AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers’ posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Steven Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right*, pp.164-184
2. Excerpts from Theodore White, *The Making of the President***
3. Don Hewitt, *Oral History of the Television Debates* **
4. Michael Schudson, “Trout or Hamburger?” in *The Power of News* **

Week 7: Change is Gonna Come: Music and the Movement

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due Monday February 27th at 9 AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers’ posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Bradford Martin, *The Theater is in the Streets*, pp. 3-48.
2. Steven Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right*, pp. 185-226.

Week 8: Losing Cronkite: The News Media, the New Left, and the Vietnam War

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due Monday March 6th at 9 AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers' posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Bradford Martin, *The Theater is in the Streets*, pp.125-159
2. Steven Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right*, 227-269
3. Excerpts from *Conversations with Cronkite***

REQUIRED FILM: *Berkeley in the Sixties*

Week 9: NO CLASS- Spring Break

Week 10: “The Gating of America”: Taking Down President Nixon

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due Monday March 27th at 9 AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers' posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Michael Schudson, “The Myth of Watergate” in *Power of News* **
2. Bruce Schulman, “Down to the nut-cutting” in *The Seventies***
3. Gabriel Sherman, *The Loudest Voice in the Room*, introduction and pp. 45-78
4. Primary Documents: The “Smoking Gun” tape **

REQUIRED FILM: *All the President's Men* (1976)

Week 11: Module 2 Essay Exam Due April 3rd at 9AM

Module 3: The Age of Showbiz Politics

Week 12: “Live from New York...” *Saturday Night Live* and Political Satire

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due Monday April 10th at 9 AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers’ posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Ron Nesson *It Sure Looks Different from the Inside*. **
2. Gabriel Sherman, *The Loudest Voice in the Room*, 79-111.
3. Steven Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right*, pp. 315-361.

REQUIRED TELEVISION SHOW: *Saturday Night Live*, April 16, 1976.

Week 13: “The War Room”: The Rise of Cable Television and the 24-hour News Cycle

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due April 17th at 9 AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers’ posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Gabriel Sherman, *The Loudest Voice in the Room*, 111-219

REQUIRED FILM: *The War Room* (1993)

Week 14: “This is the Daily Show...” Jon Stewart’s America

Journal Responses and Discussion Posts are due Monday April 24th at 9 AM EST.

NOTE: Your original comment in response to the discussion prompt should be posted to the group discussion board by Friday at 5PM and you should post at least two comments on your peers’ posts by Monday at 9AM.

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Gabriel Sherman, *The Loudest Voice in the Room*, 223-306
2. Steven Ross, *Hollywood Left and Right*, pp. 363-418.

Week 15: Prepare for Final Exam (will be available on Friday, April 28th at 5PM)

ASSIGNED READING:

1. Gabriel Sherman, *The Loudest Voice in the Room*, 309-395

Week 16: Final Essay Exam Due on May 3rd at 9AM