

Journalism 311: Press & Politics – Fall, 2008

Tues/Thurs 2:15-3:30, MRC 2

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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 9-11 or by appointment

**FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 9 a.m. to noon --  
MAKE TRAVEL PLANS ACCORDINGLY -- no rescheduling**

Course Description

We'll consider the role of the press in politics -- and vice-versa -- by reading theoretical and empirical evaluations of some recent coverage, and applying them to campaign reportage during the Fall election season. We will also discuss the ways in which governments sometimes distort and restrict access to public information.

Texts

The news and entertainment media.

*The Press Effect*, by Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Paul Waldman

*Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*, by Hunter S. Thompson

*What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception*, by Scott McClellan

*Spin Cycle*, by Howard Kurtz

Occasional emails with reading/viewing assignments attached.

## Major assignments

- Blogging: you'll evaluate election campaign coverage and publish your analysis regularly in blogs.
- You'll write a magazine-length article based on your research, analysis and interviews, comparing the campaign coverage of a cable news network, a newspaper, and a magazine or other blog.

## Grading

Save all graded assignments, in case questions arise later. Homework deadlines are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Submit all assignments by email.

Campaign blog	30 points
Magazine article	30 points
Class discussion/participation	15 points
Miscellaneous assignments	10 points
Final exam	15 points

Points are approximate and subject to revision. You are encouraged to contact the instructor at any time during the semester to check on your grade.

92-100%=A; 90-91%=A-; 88-89%=B+; 82-87%=B; 80-81%=B-, etc.

## Attendance

You are expected to attend each class and to take notes on readings and on all material presented in class in whatever

form (lectures, discussions and videos, for example). It is your responsibility to find out what you missed in any class you do not attend.

## Deadlines

No late assignments will be accepted except in cases of illness or family emergency. Assignments are due at the beginning of class, so do not skip class in order to complete an assignment. Non-valid excuses are often generated when students begin work too near a deadline. Examples of non-valid excuses: erased computer file, broken printer, broken or busy computer. Anticipate such problems, start early, get the assignment in on time. If any of these instructions are unclear to you, ask me about them!

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is representing someone else's work, words, ideas or data as your own. It's plagiarism whether you use a whole document, a paragraph, a single sentence, a distinctive phrase, specific data, or a graphic element of any kind without attribution or acknowledgement of the source. It's also plagiarism if you use an idea developed by another as if it were your own. If you use any work created by someone else as your own without acknowledging the creator, and if you hand in the work -- whether it is a news story or a research paper -- with your name on it, thus implying that it is your work, then you commit plagiarism. On the other hand, when you carefully acknowledge your sources, you demonstrate the range and depth of your research and reporting.

*-- Adapted from the Virginia Tech English Department's statement on plagiarism: "Wonder Where They Got It?"*

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