**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA**

**PLIR 4500**

**“Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy”**

Fall 2014 Instructor: Philip B. K. Potter

Day and Time: Mondays 1 – 3:30PM Office: S466 Gibson

Room: New Cabell Hall 291 Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-4

Email: pbkp@virginia.edu **or by appointment**

**\*\*\*LAST UPDATED 9/1\*\*\***

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores the complex relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy. While it is widely assumed that leaders, and particularly the president, act with a relatively free hand when conducting foreign affairs, the reality is much more complex. Congress can take an active role in foreign policy, but typically only at certain times and issue areas. At the same time, despite typically low levels of political information and engagement, public opinion can and does impinge on the foreign policy process. When it does so, the media typically plays a crucial role.

In order to better these relationships, we will review historical perspectives regarding the proper role (or lack thereof) of public opinion in foreign policy, as well as more recent challenges to this perspective. This will include a discussion of whether and how the media influences what the public thinks about politics in general, and foreign affairs in particular. We will consider such issues as: How does the public learn about foreign policy? Under what circumstances will political leaders respond to the public's preferences? When will the media be responsive? Does politics really stop at the water's edge? What effect, if any, has the advent of real-time global news reporting had on U.S. Foreign policy (e.g. the so-called "CNN Effect”)? Does this represent a qualitative change, or are such claims exaggerated? The goal is to develop a coherent view of the interaction between the mass media, public opinion and political leaders with respect to foreign affairs.

I have three goals for you. First, I’d like you to learn something about how others think media, public opinion and policy interact theoretically. Second, I’d like you to learn about how these processes have unfolded in reality. Third, I’d like you to learn useful skills that will serve you in you professional and academic lives.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

***Attendance and Participation –* 25%**

The small size of this class represents an unusual opportunity and we will take advantage of it by organizing our sessions as discussion seminars. Attendance and participation is important. If you are going to miss class please discuss it with me in advance.

Each student should email me 2 discussion questions by Sunday midnight before each class.

Each student will also be responsible for organizing and leading the discussion of one of the readings. I would like you to begin with a 5-minute presentation in which you lay out some key themes and outline an agenda for the class discussion. I’ll discuss expectations in more detail in class, but part of the idea here is to develop skills that you will all draw on in your careers – presenting as well as leading a meeting.

***Writing Assignments* – 50%**

There will be one paper (20 pages, double spaced), based on the material covered in the course. The term paper can be either a literature review on one or two of the topics covered in the course or a research paper on a topic of the student’s choice. Students must submit a paper proposal, for approval, no later than the fifth meeting of the course. Prior to that I would like you to meet with me in person to discuss paper ideas. The final paper will be due on the day of the final exam.

*Final Exam –* **25%**

The final exam will be held during the regular exam period and cover the reading and discussion. We will hold review for the exam in the last class period. The exam will only be given during the regular exam period.

**POLICIES**

I try to be very available to students. In addition to regular office hours I am happy to meet with you by appointment.

A reminder to all students regarding plagiarism: don’t do it. I take the honor code very seriously. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism please come talk to me.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

This course is primarily based on important articles and book chapters. All readings will be available on Collab.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

This course schedule is subject to change. In particular, the guests may reschedule, causing the classes to shift. In addition, I will tailor readings as we proceed in order to better accommodate the interests of the class.

**9/1 – Introduction and Logistics**

• Thinking through the Syria Case

**9/8 – Where Does Public Opinion Come From?**

• Nature and structure of opinions and belief systems

• Ideological innocence vs. low-information rationality

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes.

1960. The American Voter, New York: Wiley. Ch. 9-10 (pp.188-265)

Sniderman, Paul. 1993. “A New Look in Public Opinion Research.” In Political

Science: The State of the Discipline II, edited by Ada Finifter. American Political

Science Association: Washington, D.C., pp.220-245.

Popkin, Samuel. 1993. The Reasoning Voter. Chapters 1-4, pp. 7-95.

**9/15 – What the Public Thinks/Knows About Foreign Policy**

• Public ignorance and/or knowledge of foreign affairs

• Mass vs. elite beliefs about foreign affairs

• Isolationism vs. Internationalism

Holsti, Ole, “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-

Lippmann Consensus.” 1992. International Studies Quarterly 36(December):

439-466.

Aldrich, John H., John L. Sullivan and Eugene Borgida. 1989. Foreign Affairs

and Issue Voting: Do Presidential Candidates ‘Waltz Before a Blind Audience’?

American Political Science Review, 83:1: 123-141.

Page, Benjamin I. and Marshall M. Bouton. 2006. The Foreign Policy

Dis\*Connect: What Americans WANT from our Leaders but DON’T GET.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4: “Military Strength and the Use

of Force”, pp. 100-138.

**9/22 – How the Public Learns About Foreign Policy**

• Priming, Framing & Agenda Setting

• The Roles of the Media and Elites

Druckman, James N. 2001. “The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen

Competence.” Political Behavior 23:225-256.

Entman, Robert M. 2003. Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion,

and U.S. Foreign Policy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2, pp.

29-49.

Jordan, D.L. and B.I. Page (1992) “Shaping Foreign Policy Opinions: The Role of

TV News.” Journal of Conflict Resolution 36:227-241.

Zaller, John. “Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf

War.” In Taken by Storm (Chapter 9, pp. 186-209.)

**9/29 – Measuring Public Opinion**

• Public opinion polling: uses and misuses

• How leaders gauge public opinion

Asher, Herbert. 2007. Polling and the Public, 7th Edition. Washington D.C.:

Congressional Quarterly Press.

Powlick, Philip J. 1995. “The Sources of Public Opinion for American Foreign

Policy Officials. International Studies Quarterly.” 39:4:427-452.

Heith, Diane J. 2003. “One for All: Using Focus Groups and Opinion Polls in the

George H.W. Bush White House.” Congress & The Presidency 30:1:81-94.

**10/6 – How the Media Cover Foreign Affairs**

• Incentive structures (economic, political, technological and institutional)

• Sources of news

• What gets covered?

Zaller, John. 1999. A Theory of Media Politics: How the Interests of Politicians,

Journalists, and Citizens Shape the News. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Unpublished Manuscript. Chapters 2-3, pp. 6-53. (Available at:

http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/zaller/media%20politics%20book%20.

pdf

Hamilton, James T. 2003 All the News That’s Fit to Sell: How the Market

Transforms Information into News. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chapter 1. (Available at: <http://www.pupress.princeton.edu/chapters/s7604.pdf>)

Seib, Phillip. 2004. Beyond the Front Lines: How the News Media Cover a World

Shaped by War, Chapters 1-2, pp.1-42.

**10/13 – NO CLASS – READING DAY**

**10/20** – **Regulation and Competition**

• Vertical integration

• Media independence

• Bias

Hamilton, James T. 2003 *All the News That’s Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information into News.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 1.

Stepp, Carl Sessions. 2001. “Whatever Happened to Competition?” *American Journalism Review* (June). (<http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=229>)

Yoo, Christopher S. "Vertical integration and media regulation in the new economy." *Yale J. on Reg.* 19 (2002): 171.

Blasco, Andrea, and Francesco Sobbrio. "Competition and commercial media bias." *Telecommunications Policy* 36.5 (2012): 434-447.

10/27 – **Soft News**

Baum, Matthew A. 2002.“Sex, Lies and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public.” *American Political Science Review* 96 (March): 1-19.

Patterson, Thomas E. 2000. *Doing Well and Doing Good: How Soft News and Critical Journalism Are Shrinking the News Audience and Weakening Democracy – And What News Outlets Can Do About It.* Report by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. (http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/webpapers.htm)

11/3 – **Guest, Richard Boucher**

* OECD Deputy Secretary
* Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs (State Department Spokesman)

See Collab for readings

11/10 – **Social Media and Foreign Policy**

See Collab for readings

11/17 – **The Rally Effect** **and Diversionary War**

Brody, Richard A. 1991. “The Rally Phenomenon in Public Opinion.” Ch 3 in *Assessing the President.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 45-80.

Levy, J.S. 1989. “The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique.” Handbook of

War Studies. Midlarsky, M.I., editor. New York: Unwin-Hyman, pp.259-288.

Ostrom, Charles W. Jr., and Brian L. Job. “The President and the Political Use of Force.” *American Political Science Review* 80(June): 541-566.

Gowa, Joanne. 1998. “Politics at the Water's Edge: Parties, Voters, and the Use of

Force Abroad.” International Organization 52(Spring):2.

11/24 – **China Case Study**

See Collab for readings

12/1 – **Ukraine Case Study**

See Collab for readings