POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Political Science 479, Winter 2012                     Prof. Amy Gangl
MWF 8:50-9:40                                             agangl@wisc.edu
120 Ingraham

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:
This course is designed to introduce you to the processes and institutions that connect citizens and our
government through communication. Its main purpose is to deepen your understanding of the uses and
functions of communication in modern democracies, the dilemmas surrounding the communication of
political information via mass media and other means, and potential solutions for these problems.
Ultimately, the course is intended to encourage you to think about your own role as a citizen in processes
of political communication. The mass media will play a big role in the topics we consider, but please be
aware that this course is not just about mass media. My view of political communication encompasses the
way citizens communicate with each other, with their government, as well as the way political professionals
(media actors, government employees, elected officials and campaign professionals) communicate with
each other and with the public.

We will consider the politics that generate the news we use, the way political professionals attempt to
control the content of the news, the effect of this news on what we know and how we think about public
affairs, the processes that take place when citizens communicate with each other, and the effect mass
media have on the shape of the policies that govern us.

I highly value class discussion and interaction. I regard it as an integral part of the learning
experience and learning from you is one of the joys of my job. Therefore, I expect you to attend lectures
and to complete the assigned readings before attending class. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and
your interpretations of the way the course material informs our understanding of current events.

Course Materials:

The following books are available at the UW Bookstore, and electronically. Quick FYI: I purchase most of
my books through Kindle and find them often as much as ¼ the price of even the paperback texts. All of
these books are available on Kindle.


6..The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservativsm by Theda Skocpol and Vanessa
You will be also asked to view video sources and podcasts as listed in the syllabus and as part of your preparation and study for course papers and exams. It's an election year, so there will be assigned sources related to the 2012 presidential race as well.

Several films will be required as part of the course writing assignments; and all are available through Netflix and Amazon.com rental. See syllabus or dates below.
1. Thank You for Smoking
2. Client 9
3. Network
4. Page One (NY Times)
4. Wag the Dog
5. Good Night and Good Luck

REQUIREMENTS:
The course requirements are as follows. There will be three in-class exams, several writing participation assignments, and a final research papers.

GRADING SYSTEM:
Grades will be determined as follows:

1. Participation Writing Assignments: 25%
2. Three in-class midterms @ 20% each: 60%
3. Final Term paper: 15%

Participation Writing Assignments
Participation Writing Assignments are meant to give you an opportunity to think about and integrate some of the ideas that we have discussed in class with the reading materials for the day as well as with current political events. They will often differ in content and form. They are primarily a means of reflecting on the reading materials and motivating class discussion. These participation writing assignments will comprise 25% of your total grade.

Exams
There will be three in-class exams throughout the semester. Each will be comprised of short answer and essay questions. I will provide you with more information about the exams as the dates near. These exams will comprise 60% of your grade.

Final Paper
Fifteen percent of your final grade will be based on a final paper. The paper should be between 9-10 pages, double-spaced, and will be due on Friday May 18 via email. I will offer guidelines and expectations as we move closer to the end of the semester.
Course Schedule:

1. **Monday January 23**  
   Topic: The role of communication in democracy  
   
   Video:  
   Thank You for Smoking – Watch Outside of Class  
   Free on Youtube in 9 Parts: Part 1 starts at:  
   http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PE0FDhm0-E  
   
   Thank You for Smoking Paper Due Friday January 27

2. **Wednesday January 25**  
   Topic: The place of news media in democracy  

3. **Friday January 27**  
   Topic: Access to the Media and Media Bias  
   Reading: - Bennett book, Chapters 2 “New Stories: Four Information Biases that Matter,” and 6 “Inside the Profession: Objectivity and the Political Authority of Bias.”  
   
   Due: Thank You for Smoking Paper

4. **Monday January 30**  
   Topic: Shaping the Political Agenda:  
   Reading: - Farnsworth and Lichter, “The Struggle Over Shaping News,” MPIP, 241-250  
   - Skocpol and Williamson Book; Chapter 1 “Behind the Costumes and Designs: Who are the Tea Partiers?”

5. **Wednesday February 1**  
   Topic Shaping the Political Agenda  
   Reading: - Gibson, “New Media and Revitalization of Politics,” MPIP, 203-213  
   - Skocpol and Williamson Book; Chapter 2 “What they Believe: Ideas and Passions.”

6. **Friday February 3**  
   Topic: Media and Military  
   Readings: - Department of Defense, “Principles of Information,”  
   http://www.defenselink.mil/admin/prininfo.html  
   - Aday, “The Real War Will Never Get on Television: An Analysis of Casualty Imagery,” MPIP, 327-336

7. **Monday February 6**  
   Topic: Who gets public affairs information and what do we learn?  
   - Skocpol and Williamson Book; Chapter 3 “Mobilization Grassroots and Roving Billionaires: The Panopoly of Tea Party Organizations”
8. Wednesday February 8
Topic: Propaganda and Persuasion

Video: Watch Wag the Dog
Available via Netflix and rental at Amazon.com

Discussion Questions for Wag the Dog Due Friday February 10.

9. Friday February 10: No Class; Wag the Dog Discussion Questions Due

10. Monday February 13
Topic: Skocpol and Williamson Book
Reading:-Skocpol and Williamson Boo; Chapters 4-6

11. Wednesday February 15
Topic: Exam Review.

12. Friday February 17: EXAM #1

13. Monday February 20
Topic: Elections
Readings:-Patterson, “The Miscast Institution,” MPIP, 193-2012

14. Wednesday February 22
Topic: Overview of Media Effects; Cynicism
Reading:-Bennett Book; Chapter 3 “Citizens and the News: Public Opinion and Information Processing.”

15. Friday February 24
Topic: Political Economy and News:
Reading:-Bennett Book; Chapters 7-8

16. Monday February 27
Topic: Polarization and Political Communication
Reading: -Sunstein Book; Chapters 1-2

Video:
Watch: Good Night and Good Luck
Available through Netflix and Amazon rental.

Paper on Good Night and Good Luck and Sunstein Book Due Wednesday March 7
17. Wednesday February 29
Topic: Disdaining the Media
Reading - Sunstein Book; Chapter 3

18. Friday March 2: No Class

19. Monday March 5
Topic: Sunstein’s Extremism
Reading: Sunstein Book; Chapters 4-5

20. Wednesday March 7: Good Night and Good Luck/Sunstein Paper Due

21. Friday March 9
Topic: News Coverage and Crime

22. Monday March 12
Topic: News Coverage and Foreign Policy
Reading: - “Mediating the Public’s Influence on Foreign Policy, MPIP, 315-326
-“End of Television and Foreign Policy,” MPIP 355-364

23. Wednesday March 14
Topic: Conundrum’s of Connected Lives
Reading: - Powers book, Chapters 1-4

24. Friday March 16
Topic: Philosophers and Screens
Reading: - Powers book, Chapters 5-7

25. Monday March 19
Topic: Philosophers and Screens
Reading: Powers book, Chapters 8-11

26. Wednesday March 21
Topic: Hamlet’s Blackberry
Reading: - Powers book, Chapters 12-13

27. Friday March 23
Topic: The Internet and Public Policy
Reading: - “The Internet and Public Policy,” MPIP, 441-423

28. Monday March 26
Topic: Review for Exam #2
29. Wednesday March 28: EXAM #2

30. Friday March 30: No Class

March 31 - April 8: Spring Break

31. Monday April 9
Topic: Stereotypes and Implicit Priming

32. Wednesday April 11
Topic: Role of media in social movements and mass mobilization
Reading: McAdam, “Strategies of the American Civil Rights Movement,” MPIP, 275-283

33. Friday April 13
Topic: Social Capital

34. Monday April 16
Topic: Blogging and Politics
Reading: “A Symbiotic Relationship: Bloggers and Journalists,” MPIP, 293-302

35. Wednesday April 18
Topic: Al Jazeera

36. Friday April 20
Topic: Amateur Journalism and International Affairs
Reading: “What International Journalism Means for International Affairs,” MPIP, 67-80

37. Monday April 23
Topic: Fake News
Reading: Amarasingam book, pp. 3-46

38. Wednesday April 25
Reading: Amarasingam book, pp. 47-78

39. Friday April 27
Reading: Amarasingam book, pp. 79-116

40. Monday April 30
Reading: Amarasingam book, pp. 117-148

41. Wednesday May 2
Reading: Amarasingam book, pp. 149-192
42. Friday May 4:
   Amarasingam Paper Due

43. Monday May 7

44. Wednesday May 9
   Review for Exam #3

45. Friday May 11: Exam #3

Final Paper Due Friday May 18 via email