

Politics and the Media Syllabus 2024/25

Instructor

Francisco Seoane Pérez

Phone

(+34) 91 624 85 55

Email

francisco.seoane@uc3m.es

Office Location

Ortega y Gasset Bld.,
Room 17.2.06

Office Hours

Wed, 10:30-12:30h.

Course Overview

This is a course on the theory and practice of the role of the media in politics. The theory lectures will begin with normative theories on what a functional public sphere may look like, moving on to the analysis of the public communication of political actors in a liberal democracy: politicians, journalists and activists. In parallel, on the practical training sessions you will learn the basics of political campaigning, preparing a debate among candidates.

The class convenes on Wednesday afternoons between 2:30pm and 5:45pm, with a 15-minute break at 4pm. Such break marks the division between the theory lecture delivered by the instructor and the practical training workshop in which you will be preparing a leaders' debate for the Canadian federal election of 2025.

As you can read on the Grading Policy section below, the final exam is worth 30% of your final grade, whereas various practical assignments will be worth 70%.

Required Texts

There are no required texts for this course. You will find the sources for each lecture in the final slide of the Powerpoint files that you may download from our Aula Global course page. However, if you are looking for a textbook, I would recommend these two, one in English (for the American context), another in Spanish (for the Spanish context):

- *The dynamics of political communication: Media and politics in a digital age*, by Richard M. Perloff (Routledge, 2018, 2nd Ed.).
- *Comunicación política: caja de herramientas*, by Enrique Gil Calvo (Catarata, 2018).

For the book exam (see below for details) you will have to read one of the five books suggested by the instructor and respond to a series of questions in writing.

Key Dates

There are two main graded assignments before the final exam:

- Book exam: April 30, 2025
- Debate memorandum: May 14, 2025
- Final exam: May 22, 2025

Course Schedule

Week	Lecture (Wed, 14:30-16:00h.)	Classwork (Wed, 16:15-17:45h.)
Week 1 (Jan 31, 2025)	Introduction to political communication	The massless media
Week 2 (Feb 7, 2025)	Communication and community	Running electoral campaigns
Week 3 (Feb 14, 2025)	The public sphere	Persuasive speeches
Week 4 (Feb 21, 2025)	Journalism and liberal democracy	Interviews and campaign debates
Week 5 (Feb 28, 2025)	Propaganda	Political advertising
Week 6 (Mar 6, 2025)	Voting	Debate preparation in groups
Week 7 (Mar 13, 2025)	Parties and candidates	Debate preparation in groups
Week 8 (Mar 20, 2025)	Political advisors and consultants	Debate rehearsal: Foreign policy
Week 9 (Apr 3, 2025)	Interest groups	Debate rehearsal: Housing
Week 10 (Apr 10, 2025)	Social movements	Debate rehearsal: Environment
Week 11 (Apr 17, 2025)	The impact of the Internet	Debate rehearsal: Healthcare
Week 12 (Apr 24, 2025)	Book exam	In-class written examination
Week 13 (May 8, 2025)	Leaders' debate simulation	Live debate (Aula Magna)

Homework Schedule

Due date	Assignment	Length in words/minutes
April 30, 2025	Book exam	90 minutes
May 7, 2025	Debate simulation	90 minutes
May 14, 2025	Debate memorandum	1,500-3,000

Grading Policy

The final grade for this course will be result of the sum of the following items:

- **Class participation (10%).**- In some practical training sessions you will be completing small in-class assignments.
- **Debate memorandum (15%).**- This document will be a memory of your experience preparing the debate.
- **Debate rehearsals and final simulation (20%).**- All students, irrespective of who are the ones performing the final simulation, will participate in class exercises preparing debate sections.
- **Book exam (25%).**- A written response to questions about your chosen book, to be selected among the following five titles:

- Benkler, Y., Faris, R. and Roberts, H. (2018). *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- George, C. (2017). *Hate Spin: The Manufacture of Religious Offense and Its Threat to Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gershberg, Z. and Illing, S. (2022). *The Paradox of Democracy: Free Speech, Open Media, and Perilous Persuasion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kosseff, J. (2023). *Liar in a Crowded Theater: Freedom of Speech in a World of Misinformation*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rauch, J. (2021). *The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- **Final exam (30%).-** An online-based quiz exam with 20 questions, to be completed in 15 minutes. Wrong answers are not penalized more than blanks, so if unsure of which is the correct answer, try to guess. International students needing an early examination should contact the instructor to negotiate an early date for their exam.