George Mason University  
Graduate Course Approval/Inventory Form

(Please complete this form and attach a copy of the syllabus for new courses. Forward it as an email attachment to the Secretary of the Graduate Council. A printed copy of the form with signatures should be brought to the Graduate Council Meeting. Complete the Coordinator Form on page 2, if changes in this course will affect other units.)

Please indicate:  

[ ] NEW               [ ] MODIFY               [ ] DELETE

Local Unit: SPP  
Graduate Council Approval Date:

Course Abbreviation: PUBP  
Course Number: 739

Full Course Title: Media and Public Policy

Abbreviated Course Title (24 characters max.): Media and Public Policy

Credit hours: 3  
Program of Record: PUBP

Repeatable for Credit?  

[ ] D=Yes, not within same term Up to hours

[ ] T=Yes, within the same term Up to hours

[ ] N=Cannot be repeated for credit

Activity Code (please indicate):  

[ ] Lecture (LEC)  [ ] Lab (LAB)  [ ] Recitation (RCT)

[ ] Studio (STU)  [ ] Internship (INT)  [ ] Independent Study (IND)

Catalog Credit Format 3: 3: 0  
Course Level: GF(500-600) [ ] GA(700+) [ ]

Maximum Enrollment: 25  
For NEW courses, first term to be offered: 04B

Prerequisites or corequisites: N/A

Catalog Description (35 words or less):
Explores the complex relationship between media and public policy. Examines how these forces collide in our modern media, how coverage decisions regarding public policy are made in newsrooms, how advocates use and rely on the media to advance their message, and how different media reflect different strengths and vulnerabilities.

For MODIFIED or DELETED courses as appropriate:

Last term offered:  
Previous Course Abbreviation:  
Previous number:

Description of modification:

APPROVAL SIGNATURES:

Department/Program: ___________________________________ Date: __________________

College Committee: ___________________________________ Date: __________________

Graduate Council Representative: __________________________ Date: __________________
Approval from other units:

Please list those units outside of your own who may be affected by this new, modified, or deleted course. Each of these units must approve this change prior to its being submitted to the Graduate Council for approval.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit: SPP</th>
<th>Head of Unit’s Signature:</th>
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Graduate Council approval: ___________________________ Date: __________

Graduate Council representative: ______________________ Date: __________

Provost Office representative: ________________________ Date: __________
A copy of the syllabus can be viewed at http://mpp.gmu.edu/course/syllabi/03sp/PUBP710-003.html

“The Media and Public Policy:
Mesurers Amid the Madness”

Class Time: Monday, 4:30 p.m. – 7:10 p.m.

Location: ARLO 246

Instructor: Frank Sesno sesno@gmu.edu

Assistant: Juliana Hoskinson jhoskins@gmu.edu

Office Hours: Monday 3:30 – 4:30 and by appointment

Office phone number: (703) 993-4961

This class will explore the complex and increasingly critical relationship between media and public policy. In a society where a 24/7 news cycle bombards a fractured public, where ‘infotainment’ and the ‘argument culture’ often overshadow traditional journalism, it has become more difficult to focus public debate and build political consensus necessary to shape, lead or change public policy. Polls, focus groups, Orwellian talking points, sound-bitten debates, massive spending by special interests and corporate ratings/circulation pressures can distort and overshadow important issues.

We will examine how these forces collide in our modern media, how coverage decisions regarding public policy are made in newsrooms, how advocates use and rely on the media to advance their message and how different media reflect different strengths and vulnerabilities. We will attempt to understand the consequences of what respected journalists Tom Rosenstiel and Bill Kovach refer to as the “mixed media culture” and its impact on the pursuit of public policy. We will probe the relationship between coverage and public opinion, and their influence on American domestic and international policy.

This course has several objectives: to convey a deeper and nuanced understanding of the relationship between the media and public policy and the decision-making process that shapes the journalism of complex issues; to examine how public policy practitioners factor the media into their work and strategy; to understand some of the communication strategies designed to influence public opinion; and to explore whether and how the media help or hinder the civil discourse we require as a democracy.

The course will be lively, provocative and highly interactive, with extensive reading and an expectation that students will follow the news on a daily basis from several sources. We will make use of case studies and real world examples, reinforced by student presentations and frequent visits by accomplished professionals. Our guests will represent the media, public policy, advocacy groups, opinion polling, public relations and strategic communications.
There will be several writing assignments. All papers should be submitted in class AND sent via email to sesno@georgetown.edu. Papers should be composed in standard 12-point font, double spaced, standard margins. Citations and bibliography are required. Papers lacking proper academic documentation will not be accepted.

- The first paper will be due week #3, Feb 10. You will examine a news program or newscast to assess its coverage of issues. You should consult and make reference to early course readings to make your assessment. You should address the questions raised on page six of the article “Before and After: War and News” by Rosenstiel et al. (Journalism.org). This paper should be two pages long. (10% of grade)

- The mid-term paper is due March 3rd. This exercise will involve your critical assessment of an issue as measured by the “CNN effect.” You will be expected to define the issue, assess the coverage and determine whether and how the so-called “CNN effect” plays into the formation of public opinion and/or policy. This paper should be four to five pages in length. (30% of grade)

- A one-page proposal is due for your final paper on March 17th. (See below.)

- The final paper is due May 5th. Each student will be expected to select a topic, with the instructor’s approval, and write a 5,000 word (20 – 22 page) analytical research paper built around a public policy case study. This examination is intended to probe the relationship between a major issue and the coverage surrounding it. The paper should emphasize and utilize concepts covered in class to examine the subject and develop a conclusion and recommendations. Your paper should reflect graduate level research and analysis. The paper must cite readings from the course. (40% of grade)

Class discussion and participation will be a central component of this course and worth 20% of your final grade. You will be expected to be well informed, organized, armed with the courage of your convictions – and prepared to articulate and defend your point of view.

Course syllabus and links to the readings can be viewed through the class Web site on WebCT. Go to webct.georgetown.edu and log on with your e-mail user name. If you have never used WebCT, the password is the last four digits of your student ID. You are responsible for all reading assignments; be sure you navigate the class Web site and locate all the articles and/or linked readings identified in the syllabus. Should you detect any problems, report them well in advance, so we can address them.

- You are responsible for completing assignments on time. You will be penalized the equivalent of one full letter grade for each day the assignment is late. Assignments overdue more than a week won’t be accepted.

- If you cannot attend a class due to personal emergency, you should let one of us know prior to class when possible. Contact a class member to find out what you missed. You are responsible for all announcements, assignments and material covered in class.

- Incomplete grades will not be given unless there is a documented medical, family or personal emergency.
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<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READINGS</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 1/27</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Articles: 1. “The invisible agencies” by Lieberman</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2. “Foreign news: What’s next?” by Parks (cjr.org)</td>
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<td>2 2/3</td>
<td>Journalists and journalism: an overview of the business</td>
<td>Book: “The News About the News,” chapters 1-3 and 8 (pp. 3-62; 219-252)</td>
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<td>Article: “In defense of journalism as a public trust” (Poynter.org)</td>
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<td>Articles: “Before and After: War and News” by Rosenstiel et al. (Journalism.org)</td>
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<td>DUE: Dissect newscast/morning show, addressing the question on page 6 of the article “Before and After War”</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 2/17</td>
<td>War and Terrorism</td>
<td>Articles: 1. “Too Free?” (ajr.org)</td>
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<td>2. “Global News and U.S. Policymaking” by Gilboa</td>
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<td>5 2/24</td>
<td>War and Terrorism</td>
<td>Book: “Mass Mediated terrorism”</td>
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<td>chapters 1-3 (pp. 7-102)</td>
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<td>Article: “Clarifying the CNN effect” by Livingston</td>
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<td>6 3/3</td>
<td>War and Terrorism</td>
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<td>chapters 4-7 (pp. 103-198)</td>
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|         |                                                                           | DUE: Midterm assignment: The “CNN Effect” – Examine the coverage and impact of global journalism with the focus on an issue of diplomacy, defense or foreign policy.
3/10

SPRING BREAK

7 3/17
News, Polls and Policy
Book: “Governing with the news”
chapters 4 and 5 (pages 61-116)


2. “22% of Americans get news from talk jocks” by Carney (LA Times)

Optional: “Governing with the News” chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-60)
DUE: One-page proposal for final research paper.

8 3/24
News and Government
Book: “Governing with the news” chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 117-163)

Booklet: “Communicating in a crisis” (To be distributed)

9 3/31
Case study: Healthcare Book: “The System” chapters 1-3 (pp. 3-47); 6-7 (pp. 96-178)

10 4/7

11 4/14
Politics and Scandal Book: “Truth to tell” Preface and ch.1 (pp. 11-64)

Article: “Public Offices Private Lives” by Schauer

12 4/21
Politics and Scandal
Book: “Truth to tell” ch. 7 (pp. 177-206)

Book on reserve: “Feeding the Beast” chapters 17-20 (pp. 236-298)
13 4/28
Looking Ahead
Books: “The news about the news” chapter 9 (pp. 252-269);
“Governing with the news” ch. 8 (164-192);
Book on reserve: “Feeding the Beast” ch. 20-21 (pp. 280-307)

14 5/5
Reading TBA
DUE: Group Presentations: Analyze quality impact and consequences of coverage on a given public policy issue. Special attention should be paid to public opinion and real world outcome.

15 5/12
Final thoughts
Reading TBA
DUE: Group Presentations

DUE: Final Paper