

490: Advanced Readings in Political Communication
Wednesday, 12:30-1:45pm
Halls of Fame, Carroll Hall

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Hours: Wednesdays, 1:45pm-2:45pm

and by appointment

In many ways, the 2016 U.S. presidential election was perplexing. The president flouted many long-established norms of political discourse and behavior, from dispensing with the racial ‘dog-whistle’ in favor of explicit racial appeals to bringing numerous financial conflicts of interest to the White House. The political science fundamentals models somewhat accurately predicted the election outcome, although there were significant failings in the polls at the state level. The fact that the campaign effects from Hillary Clinton’s superior organization never emerged begs the question of how much campaigns matter. It is also at least clear that partisanship is such a strong identity that shapes vote choice that partisans will back their team regardless of the qualifications of candidates. Finally, the degree to which state polling was wrong about the 2016 election, and deeply rooted qualitative studies of how individuals think and feel about politics were right, raised fundamental questions about the practice of social science and the validity of our methods.

This class offers a semester of directed reading around seven books that help explain and shed light on the 2016 cycle. They cover issues of democracy, race, and class, geography and identity, media and political communication, how we think and feel about politics, and how we talk about politics, and fail to. This class is a seminar in the classic sense; students are expected to read an entire book every two weeks, discuss it in a group of their peers, and reflect on it and critique it through writing. It is a class that will prize ideas, close and critical reads of texts, and independent thought and inquiry. The books we read will provide the basis for class discussion, but not the limits. Connecting what we read to your own lives will be highly valued. All of which is in the service of thinking about where we go in the future to strengthen democratic values, norms, and institutions.

The School of Media and Journalism’s accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: <http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps> Students taking this course will be able to think critically, creatively, and independently, write correctly and clearly, and critically evaluate their own work and that of others.

Readings

Isenberg, Nancy. *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*. Penguin, 2016.

Vance, J. D. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. Harper Collins UK, 2016.

Hochschild, Arlie R., *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. NY: The New Press, 2016.

Harris-Lacewell, Melissa V. *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Hemmer, Nicole. *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Graves, Lucas. *Deciding What's True: The Rise of Political Fact Checking in American Journalism*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2016.

Allen, Danielle S. *Talking to Strangers. Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board of Education*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Grades

Participation (including in-class comments and discussion posts): 40%

Discussion posts: 20%

In-class seminar discussion: 20%

Book Reviews: 60%

A	4
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2
C-	1.7
D	1
3.833-4	A
3.832-3.5001	A-
3.499-3.167	B+
3.166-2.834	B
2.833-2.501	B-
2.5-2.167	C+
2.166-1.834	C
1.833-1.500	C-
1.499-1.166	D+
1.165-0.832	D
0.831-0.498	D-

Course Requirements

Participation

This course is premised on active discussion and is run as a seminar. This means we will talk about books. You are expected to come to class having completed the readings and ready to discuss them. In addition, you are expected to be following the daily political media of whatever stripe. You are expected to attend every class period. Absences for a medical reason or a known other commitment (such as a job interview) should be cleared with the instructor.

In addition, for each class period you are responsible for posting a short discussion comment (under 200 words) and a question for class discussion.

Book Reviews

Over the course of the semester, you are responsible for completing *three* book reviews. These reviews should be in the range of 2,000 words (about eight double spaced pages.) Reviews should offer a summary of the author's key arguments and evidence, but more importantly should outline *your* evaluation of the book. This means its strengths and weaknesses, as well as what would have made the work stronger. For instance, you can evaluate what an author did particularly well with respect to the work (such as using evidence to support her claims), but also a work's limitations (did the author overlook something, for instance, or make assertions that were unsupported by the evidence?) You are free to bring the books we have read in this class into dialogue with one another (such as 'author X argued this, but author Y showed that...') as well as draw on other coursework you have had or your own personal experiences.

For examples, see the New York Review of Books, the LA Review of Books, or the book reviews in Public Culture. The aim is a smart, thoughtful, and considered book review essay.

Reviews are due one week after we finish discussing the work in question.

Special Accommodations:

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

Honor Code:

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to

produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Seeking Help:

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

Diversity:

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Laptops

There are no laptops or other electronic devices permitted in class.

Course Schedule

Wednesday, January 11th

Course Overview

Wednesday, January 18th

Isenberg, Nancy. *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*. Penguin, 2016.
Part 1

Wednesday, January 25th

Isenberg, Nancy. *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*. Penguin, 2016.
Part 2

Wednesday, February 1st

Vance, J. D. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. Harper Collins

UK, 2016.

Part 1

Wednesday, February 8th

Vance, J. D. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. Harper Collins UK, 2016.

Part 2

Wednesday, February 15th

Hochschild, Arlie R., *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. NY: The New Press, 2016.

Part 1

Wednesday, February 22nd

Hochschild, Arlie R., *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. NY: The New Press, 2016.

Part 2

Wednesday, March 1st

Hemmer, Nicole. *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Part 1

Wednesday, March 8th

Hemmer, Nicole. *Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Part 2

Wednesday, March 22nd

Harris-Lacewell, Melissa V. *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Part 1

Wednesday, March 29th

Harris-Lacewell, Melissa V. *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Part 2

Wednesday, April 5th

Graves, Lucas. *Deciding What's True: The Rise of Political Fact Checking in American Journalism*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2016.

Part 1

Wednesday, April 12th

Graves, Lucas. *Deciding What's True: The Rise of Political Fact Checking in American Journalism*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2016.

Part 2

Wednesday, April 19th

Allen, Danielle S. *Talking to Strangers. Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board of Education*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Part 1

Wednesday, April 26th

Allen, Danielle S. *Talking to Strangers. Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board of Education*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Part 2