953 Seminar in Political Communication

Address: Dr. Ronald Lee  
Department of Communication Studies  
437 Oldfather

Telephone: 472-2255 Office  
472-2070 Secretary

Email: rlee1@unl.edu  
Course website: http://blackboard.unl.edu  
Electronic reserves: http://iris.unl.edu

Department Mission Statement

The role and mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies are to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, and societies. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages. The department's research, teaching, and service devote particular attention to understanding the ways in which communication erodes and sustains collaboration within and among local, national, and global communities.

Books


Other Readings

In a separate list, you will see a list of articles and book chapters. Specific readings from this list will be selected for the “Applications” in each course section.

Requirements

Readings/Reports: This course demands a great deal of reading. You must keep up with the reading. The course will not be carried by my talking, but with our talking with each other. You will be asked to report on readings in order to draw out key themes.

Critical Think Pieces: During the course of the semester, you will be asked to write short 4-8 pp. think pieces over some issue in political communication that has been suggested by the readings and/or our discussion. These are not research papers but the fleshing out of an argument. You will present these to the other members of the seminar and we will engage in close questioning of your argument.
Final Essay: You may take one of your critical think pieces or develop another course theme into a fully developed scholarly essay that is suitable for conference presentation and potentially publication.

Course Policies

Evaluation of Student Work: A written evaluation will accompany essays. If you disagree with my evaluation of your work, feel free to come and speak with me. Please do this within a day or two of the time you receive your evaluation. I am not defensive about my grading and you should feel no apprehension about discussing the evaluation of your work. On occasion I have been persuaded to change a grade.

Completion of Assignments: All major assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. If a student fails to turn in an essay, the student will receive an F for the final course grade regardless of the quality of other work.

Late Work and Excused Absences: Extensions will be granted only where the student is able to document special circumstances and provide the instructor with prior notification. All other work will be penalized one letter grade for every 24 hours past the due date.

Schedule

Week 1  Course introduction.

   Everything I need to know about politics I learned in kindergarten.

   Introduction to Alasdair MacIntyre’s After Virtue.

Week 2  Discussion: Words and Power


   Discussion: Politics and Virtue

   MacIntyre, After Virtue
   Chapters 1-2.
   Chapter 3.
   Chapter 4.

Week 3  Discussion: Politics and Virtue (cont.)

   Chapter 5.
   Chapter 6-7.
   Chapter 8
   Chapter 9-10
   Chapter 11-12
Chapter 13-14

Week 4  Discussion: Politics and Virtue (cont.)

Chapter 15
Chapter 16
Chapter 17-18

Applications: Liberal rights; conservative virtues

Week 5  Critical think piece #1

Week 6  Discussion: Politics and Style

Hariman, *Political style*

Chapter 1, “Introduction.”
Chapter 2, “Realist Style.”
Chapter 3, “Courtly Style.”

Applications: Examples of political styles in American politics

Week 7  Discussion: Politics and Style (cont.)

Chapter 4, “Republican Style.”
Chapter 5, “Bureaucratic Style.”
Chapter 6, “Conclusion.”

Applications: Examples of political styles in American politics

Week 8  Critical think piece #2

Week 9  Discussion: The Political Spectacle

Edelman, *Constructing the political spectacle.*

Chapter 1, “Some Premises about Politics.”
Chapter 3, “The Construction and Uses of Political Leaders.”
Chapter 4, “The Construction and Uses of Political Enemies.”

Applications: Examples of constructed leaders, social problems, and enemies

Week 10  Chapter 5, “The Ambiguities of Political News.”
Chapter 6, “Political Language and Political Reality”
Chapter 7, “The Political Spectacle as Tactic and as Mystification.”

Applications: Examples of constructed leaders, social problems, and enemies

Week 11  Critical think piece #3
Week 12 Discussion: Political Mythology

Flood, *Political myth.*
Chapter 1, “Political Ideology.”
Chapter 2, “Sacred Myth/Political Myth.”
Chapter 3, “Telling Myths.”
Chapter 4, “Believing Myths.”
Chapter 5, “Questions of Form.”

Week 13 Discussion: Political Mythology (cont.)

Chapter 6, “Ideological Meaning in History.”
Chapter 7, “Icons, Indexes, and Rituals.”
Chapter 8, “Case Studies in Mythopoeic Narrative: (1) De Gaulle’s ‘Bayeux Constitution’.”
Chapter 9, “Case Studies in Mythopoeic Narrative: (2) The Story of Wilma Mankiller.”

Applications: Myth, ideology, and criticism

Week 14 Critical think piece #4

Week 15 Discussion of final essays.