

# COURSE SYLLABUS



## Media in a Democracy

**Course code:** JRN 220

**Semester and year:** Fall 2021

**Day and time:** Mondays, 18:30 – 21:15

**Instructor:** Robert Warren, M.A.

**Instructor contact:** [robert.warren@aauni.edu](mailto:robert.warren@aauni.edu)

**Consultation hours:** By appointment

<b>Credits US/ECTS</b>	3/6	<b>Level</b>	Intermediate
<b>Length</b>	12 weeks	<b>Pre-requisite</b>	TOEFL iBT 71
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	Bachelor Required/Elective

### 1. Course Description

This course aims to analyze the complex relationships between people, power, and information – or rather, citizens, democratically elected governments, and mass media outlets. Starting out as little more than distributors of religious pamphlets and political propaganda, news media outlets have become, in the last 40 years, a global force of once unimaginable scale and power. We will examine their assumed role as the people’s watchdog and the protector of the informed citizen, against a backdrop of private interests and rising corporate oligopolies. It is our aim, therefore, to understand mass media power and how it relates to the idea of maintaining democratic values. We will continue by looking at the seismic impact the internet has had on information dissemination; namely: social media, open source content, blogging and podcasts, fake news, and the impact of algorithms on the polarization of political opinion. With such a plethora of knowledge at our fingertips, are citizens of democracies today better able to exercise their people-power, or are these notions of democratic agency nothing more than elusive ideals?

### 2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the history of ideas related to and general foundations of the concept of democracy
- Understand the history of print media and mass information dissemination
- Be able to define the triad relationship between, democratic governments, democratic citizens, and a free press
- Think critically about the growth in the power of the mass media in the US since the 1980s
- Explain the paradoxical relationship between democratic governments and media regulation

- Explain how the expansion of the internet has affected the dissemination of information worldwide
- Draw conclusions about the state of democracies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century from a media perspective

### **3. Reading Material**

#### ***Required Texts (selected chapters on NEO):***

1. Bernays, Edward (1928) *Propaganda*
2. Chomsky, Noam & Herman, Edward (1988) *Manufacturing Consent*
3. Curran, James (2011) *Media and Democracy*
4. Dewey, John (1927) *The Public and its Problems*
5. Lichtenburg, Judith (Ed.) (1990) *Democracy and the Mass Media*
6. Lippmann, Walter (1922) *Public Opinion*
7. Habermas, Jürgen (1962) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*
8. Mill, John Stuart (1859) *On Liberty*
9. McChesney, Robert (1999) *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*
10. Wu, Tim (2017) *The Attention Merchants*
11. Zuboff, Shoshana (2019) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*

#### ***Required Documentaries (on NEO):***

1. FRONTLINE: *The Facebook Dilemma* (Pts. 1 & 2) (2018) (youtube.com)
2. *Manufacturing Consent* (1988) (youtube.com)
3. *Miss Representation* (2011) (youtube.com)
4. *The Century of the Self* (Pt. 1) (2002) (youtube.com)
5. *Shadows of Liberty* (2012) (youtube.com)
6. *The Power of Nightmares* (Pt. 1) (2004) (youtube.com)

#### ***Additional Films (optional):***

1. *All the President's Men* (1976)
2. *Mad City* (1997)
3. *Network* (1976)
4. *The Post* (2017)

5. *Wag the Dog* (1997)

**4. Teaching methodology**

The course will be taught over one semester, running 2 hours and 45 minutes a week for 13 classes. There will be 2 formal exams (mid-term and final), an in-class presentation, and one research paper to be submitted.

The course material will be transmitted in the form of lectures; written summaries on assigned readings from the assigned texts, in-class discussions and student presentations.

**5. Course Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Agenda</b>
Class One: September 6 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b> <u>Introductory Lecture: The Histories and Principles of Democracy</u></p> <p><b>Description:</b>            1) Course overview, methods of evaluation, defining terminology            2) A history of the development of democratic principles, from Ancient Greece, to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the fledgling democracies of the post-colonial and post-communist world.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Concepts &amp; Principles of Democratic Governance</i>, Ch. 1 (pp. 2-11)</li> <li>- <i>Ibid.</i>, Ch. 2 (pp. 14-26)</li> <li>- <i>Concepts and Fundamental Principles of Democracy</i>, Ch. 3 (pp.12-13)</li> <li>- <i>Political Thinkers of the Enlightenment</i> (Constitutional Rights Foundation), (pp. 7-11)</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Complete readings for next week's quiz</p>
Class Two: September 13 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b> <u>The Fundamentals of Free Speech &amp; The Informed Citizen</u></p> <p><b>Description:</b> This class examines the founding principles of free speech in the pursuit of self-realization and democratic values. It aims to highlight the paradoxical nature of the democratic system as a dialectic, and raises issues of the Self and Other as posed by Hegel.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The Dialectics of Democracy</i> (SAGE Journals)</li> <li>- Lichtenburg, Ch. 2 (pp. 66-98)</li> <li>- Mill, Ch. 2 (pp. 75-118)</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Complete readings for next week's quiz</p>
Class Three: September 20 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b> <u>Public Relations &amp; the Malleable Masses</u></p>

	<p><b>Description:</b> Looking at the theories of four key thinkers (Lippmann, Dewey, Bernays, and Habermas) the ideas of the public sphere and public opinion will be examined. Additionally, Adam Curtis' landmark documentary <i>The Century of the Self</i>, will be used to help understand the development of public relations in 1920s United States, and the resulting explosion of psychoanalysis as a tool of public persuasion.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dewey, Ch. 3 (pp. 75-109)</li> <li>- Habermas, Ch. IV (pp. 181-195)</li> <li>- Lippmann, Pt. I (pp. 6-22)</li> <li>- Ibid., Pt. IV (pp. 139-172)</li> </ul> <p><b>Documentaries:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The Century of the Self</i> (Pt. 1) (youtube.com)</li> <li>- <i>Shadows of Liberty</i> (2012) by Jean-Philippe Tremblay</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Complete readings for next week's quiz</p>
<p>Class Four: September 27<sup>th</sup></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> <u>Democracy, Media, &amp; the Free Market</u></p> <p><b>Description:</b> To examine the impact of big business and corporate media oligopolies on the dissemination of information. Special attention will be paid to Chomsky and Herman's five point 'Propaganda Model.'</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chomsky, Herman, Ch.1 (pp. 1-35)</li> <li>- McChesney, Ch. 1 (pp. 15-77)</li> </ul> <p><b>Documentaries:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Manufacturing Consent</i> (1988) by Noam Chomsky &amp; Edward Herman</li> <li>- <i>The Power of Nightmares</i>, pt. 1 (2004) by Adam Curtis</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Complete readings for next week's quiz</li> </ol> <p>Prepare topic for final paper (via email)</p>
<p>Class Five: October 4<sup>th</sup></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> <u>Press Freedom &amp; Global Threats to Democracy</u></p> <p><b>Description:</b> Using investigative research from a series of press freedom NGOs, we will examine the rates of journalistic freedom worldwide, establishing what are the current trends and in what direction are they moving? Several case studies of interest will be used in our analysis, namely Hungary, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the United States.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curran, Ch. 1 (pp. 9-27)</li> <li>- McChesney, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-11)</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Complete readings for next week's quiz</li> </ol> <p>Prepare for next week's presentations</p>
<p>Class Six: October 11<sup>th</sup></p>	<p><b>Topic:</b> <u>MID-TERM EXAM</u></p> <p><b>Description:</b> Based on all classes and readings up to this point of the semester, the exam will be in the form of multiple-choice questions and short essays.</p>

	<b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> N/A
Class Seven: October 18 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b> <u>Whistleblowing &amp; the Case for Transparency</u></p> <p><b>Description:</b> To understand the role of whistleblowers and the rise of Wikileaks, its role in journalism, the arguments for and against the dissemination of classified information, and ultimately its impact on an informed citizenry. Snowden's revelations of NSA and GCHQ mass surveillance will also be central to our discussion.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Against Moral Absolutism: Surveillance and Disclosure After Snowden</i> – Rahul Sagar (journal)</li> <li>- <i>Edward Snowden, the NSA, and Mass Surveillance</i>, Constitutional Rights Foundation (crf.usa.org)</li> <li>- <i>Surveillance and Big Data</i> – David Lyon (Big Data &amp; Society) (SAGE)</li> </ul> <p><b>Documentaries:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>How we take back the internet</i> – Edward Snowden (TED Talk)</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare for mid-term (no quiz)</li> </ul>
October 25 <sup>th</sup> –29 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MIDTERM BREAK</b>
Class Eight: November 1 <sup>st</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b> <u>Has the Internet Changed Democracy?</u></p> <p><b>Description:</b> An investigation into the seismic impact of the internet on information dissemination, specifically examining issues regarding: social media, open source content, blogging and podcasts, fake news, and the impact of algorithms on the polarization of political opinion.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curran, Ch. 5 (pp. 84-96)</li> <li>- Ibid., Ch. 6 (pp. 99-110)</li> <li>- Ibid., Ch. 7 (pp. 111-120)</li> <li>- McChesney, Ch. 3 (pp. 119-185)</li> <li>- Wu, (Chapters TBD)</li> <li>- Zuboff, Ch. 1 (pp. 25-63)</li> </ul> <p><b>Documentaries:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- FRONTLINE: <i>The Facebook Dilemma</i> (Pts. 1 &amp; 2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare for mid-term (no quiz)</li> </ul>
Class Nine: November 8 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Topic:</b> <u>Safeguards to Democracy: The Paradox of Government Regulation</u></p> <p><b>Description:</b> Understanding the paradoxical position a government finds itself in the regulation of media outlets and the interest of democratic values. The Fairness Doctrine of 1949 and issues of net neutrality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be central to the class.</p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Beauchamp, (JSTOR journal article)</li> <li>- Lichtenburg, Ch. 4 (pp. 136-152)</li> <li>- Leonhardt, (JSTOR journal article)</li> </ul> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Complete readings for next week's quiz</li> </ol>

	2) Start researching for presentations (Nov. 18 <sup>th</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup> )
Class Ten: November 15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Topic:</b> <u>Student Presentations Pt. 1</u> <b>Description:</b> Students will present an 8-10 minute case study applying a selected theory from the course readings <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Complete readings for next week's quiz
Class Eleven: November 22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Topic:</b> <u>Student Presentations Pt. 2</u> <b>Description:</b> Students will present an 8-10 minute case study applying a selected theory from the course readings <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Complete readings for next week's quiz
Class Twelve: November 29 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Topic:</b> <u>Guest Lecture: RFE/RL's Role in Forwarding Democratic Principles</u> <b>Description:</b> Lecture from Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty journalist <b>Readings:</b> TBD <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Complete readings for next week's quiz
Class Thirteen: December 6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Topic:</b> <u>The Role of Media Entertainment in Political Discourse</u> <b>Description:</b> The ideas in this class will revolve around the theories of James Curran in his book <i>Media &amp; Democracy</i> , regarding the ways in which both film and TV entertainment media often present an array of political persuasions; from the empowering rhetoric of liberal individualism, to the tight social bonds of conservative collectivism. <b>Readings (on NEO):</b> - Curran, Ch. 4 (pp. 63-83) <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> 1) Prepare for final (no quiz)
Class Fourteen: December 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Topic:</b> <u>FINAL EXAM</u> <b>Description:</b> Based on all classes and readings from the whole course. The exam will be in the form of multiple-choice questions and short essays. <b>Reading:</b> N/A <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> N/A

## 6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade (%)	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
<b>Attendance</b>	42	N/A		1,2,3
<b>Weekly quizzes (participation)</b>	20	13	Ability to demonstrate comprehension of prescribed readings	1,2,3
<b>Presentation</b>	18	12	Students will be graded on; level of understanding	1,2,3

			on chosen topic, structure, argumentation and ability to answer questions	
<b>Mid-term exam</b>	20	20	Ability to demonstrate an understanding of course material with sufficiently detailed answers	1,2
<b>Final exam</b>	25	25	Ability to demonstrate an understanding of course material with sufficiently detailed answers	1,2
<b>Research paper</b>	25	30	Ability to research and write an essay on a set question that is persuasive and logically structured, using evidence from related course material and relevant academic sources	1,2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

## 7. Detailed description of the assignments

### ***[Presentation]:***

#### **Assessment breakdown**

<b>Assessed area</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Understanding of subject	40
Quality of research	25
Structure and flow	25
Stage presence / audience interest	10

### ***[Research paper]:***

#### **Assessment breakdown**

<b>Assessed area</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Understanding of subject	30
Method of argumentation	30

Quality of research	20
Quality of written structure	20

## **8. General Requirements and School Policies**

### **1. General requirements**

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

#### ***Electronic communication and submission***

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams.

Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question".

All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

#### ***Attendance***

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, is expected and encouraged. However, the requirement that students miss not more than 35% of real-time classes is temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### ***Absence excuse and make-up options***

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), and the student wishes to request that the absence be excused, the student should submit an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence to the Dean of Students within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.



**Late work:** No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

### ***Electronic devices***

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

**Eating** is not allowed during classes.

### ***Cheating and disruptive behavior***

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the student's Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the student will fail the exam or assignment and be expelled from the exam or class.

### ***Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center***

Plagiarism is "the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work." (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin's White Paper 'The Plagiarism Spectrum' (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another's work, word-for-word, as one's own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one's own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.

8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The "Aggregator" includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text's original wording and/or structure.

At minimum, plagiarism from types 1 through 8 will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the student's Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, and to improve their academic writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at:  
<http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

### ***Course accessibility and inclusion***

Students with disabilities should contact the Dean of Students to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive.

Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

## 9. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95 – 100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90 – 94	
B+	87 – 89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 – 86	
B-	80 – 82	
C+	77 – 79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 – 76	
C-	70 – 72	
D+	65 – 69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 – 64	
F	0 – 59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Prepared by and when:** Robert Warren, July 2021

**Approved by and when:** AK, 3/8/21