

DHP P237: Global Media and International Conflict

Summer 2009

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 7:00 – 10:00 PM

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National and international public opinion is an increasingly powerful factor in domestic & foreign policy. At the same time, technological developments make access to information networks more affordable to larger and larger publics. Combined, these two trends guarantee that the information & entertainment media will play a growing role in the development of domestic and international conflicts.

This course is an introduction to the study of media and international conflict. The course begins with a survey of conflict and communications theories. Next we consider the cognitive mechanisms that individuals use to make sense of information they receive through the media. In light of these mechanisms, we will develop theories about what is at the core of arguments about media effects, media responsibility, and bias in the media. Finally, as a prelude to discussing specific cases of media and international conflict, we consider what democratic theory says about the role of the public in foreign policy formation and the role of the media in political systems.

The second half of the course consists of a series of case studies of the media in regional and global politics. We will be concerned with international conflict as well as conflict within countries, especially as it is affected by global media coverage. For each case study, we will consider the political, historical, economic and legal contexts. By the end of the semester, we will have drafted a comparative framework for media, public opinion, and political conflict.

Course requirements include reading assignments and class participation (25% of the course grade,) a mid-term exam (25%), and a term paper (50%).

Students will be expected to keep up with the reading and participate in the class and in on-line discussions. In addition, class participation will require presentation of a brief analysis of a text or video news story about conflict, and a brief presentation of the term paper, described below. For the news story analysis, students may select a story from any newspaper, domestic or international, or a taped or downloaded radio or television news story.

The purpose of the mid-term is to verify that students can identify and employ concepts discussed in class up to that point. The mid-term will be a take home exam. Students will be expected to spend no more than 90 minutes on the exam. We will conduct an in-class review prior to the mid-term.

Term paper requirements: Students should plan to write a professional quality term paper with original analysis of the role of the media in domestic or international conflict. You may consider legal, social, and/or economic factors in addition to the fundamental political and communications issues involved. I am willing to be convinced of the appropriateness of out-of-the-ordinary research topics, but please discuss your plans with me before you invest much time in any topic.

Term papers may be case studies of specific international conflicts, studies of media in a particular region or country, or more general analyses of the media-opinion-policy nexus. Please discuss your paper topic with me shortly after the beginning of the semester. I may be able to make suggestions to refine or simplify the task you are setting for yourself. I may also be able to assist you in finding helpful relevant information.

One-fifth of your participation grade is a required, end-of-semester 10-minute presentation to the class on your term paper topic. The exercise of preparing a brief description of the purpose, goals and highlights of your research (or planned research!) will help you focus your thoughts. It is difficult to boil down your thoughts to a brief presentation unless you can distinguish the essential from the non-essential. The more polished your presentation, the more likely your classmates will be able to offer helpful feedback on your project.

Course readings consist of selections from the academic and trade literatures on media and politics. Students are invited to exchange pointers to on-line news sources and research publications.

A note on the international media: Each day, the World Wide Web is doing a better job of living up to its name. Newspapers, radio stations and TV networks from around the globe make content available on-line. Short video clips of news programs are available on sites like youtube. We will watch and discuss relevant clips in class. Also, many free-lance and amateur journalists publish 'blogs' or 'podcasts' with political content. These new media channels pose a challenge to traditional media policies, outlets, and professional norms. We will discuss the impact of these new communications media on the theories we discuss.

Students able to follow the news in a language other than English are encouraged to report on how current events are being covered in the global media. For those interested in what the international press has to say about conflicts but can't read in the original, Tufts Libraries offer access to the US government's *World News Connection* news monitoring & translation service.

Some students may have access to news programs from around the world. These programs may be a good source for term paper research. We can discuss particularly relevant segments of news programs in class if students bring in clips for viewing and discussion.

PART I: Introduction, theoretical background

TUE 19 May: Course Introduction, logistics, background

- *Discussion: what roles do the media play in international conflict? What roles could they, or should they play? If there's a difference between the ideal and reality, how do you explain? And what can be done to close the gap?*
- *What's the difference between everyday-theories of media effects vs. falsifiable theories from the communications research tradition? How can we speak scientifically, with confidence, about the role of the media in international relations?*
- *For a big-picture view of the course and scholarship in the field, read the following articles. I will make them available through the Blackboard site for the course.*

Eytan Gilboa. 2002. "Global communication and foreign policy." *Journal of Communication* 52 (4):731-748.

Piers Robinson. 2000. "World politics and media power: problems of research design." *Media, Culture & Society* 22:227-232.

NOTE: with the exception of the texts for this first class, the readings listed are to be completed *before* class, for discussion on the date indicated.

THU 21 May: Conflict & politics

- *What are some common models of political conflict? What are the dynamics of political conflict? What aspects of conflict are susceptible to influence by various communications media?*

Committee on International Conflict Resolution. 2000. *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War*. National Academies Press. Chapter 1, pp. 1-37. Available on-line at http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=9897

TUE 26 May: Communications Theory: Framing & Attribution theory

- *"Framing" is a term that is defined in many ways, ranging from everyday senses of the word to carefully crafted communications theoretic concepts. We look at framing in the media and framing as a tool in policy debates. Other concepts from the fields of communications, social psychology, and cognitive science will help us make sense of media and conflict: magic bullet theories of effects, agenda setting, cultivation theory, selective attention, the projection bias, the fundamental attribution error, cognitive dissonance, the magical number seven plus or minus two, anchoring, prospect theory.*

Robert Entman, 1993. "Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm." *Journal of Communication*, 43(4): 51-8.

W. Lance Bennett and Shanto Iyengar. 2008. A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58(4). 707-31.

Mira Sotirovic, 2003. "How Individuals Explain Social Problems: The Influences of Media Use." *Journal of Communication* 53 (1):122-137.

James N. Druckman. 2001. "On the limits of framing effects: Who can frame?" *The Journal of Politics*, 63(4), 1041-1066.

Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw. 1972. "The agenda-setting function of mass media." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 36(1), 176-87.

THU 28 May: Communications theory, public opinion & the policy process I

- *How does media coverage of international conflict affect the foreign policy making process? How do the media, political elites, and public opinion influence international relations? How do the media frame conflict? What conflict frames do the media impose on stories? Episodic vs. thematic framing of conflict & implications for conflict resolution. We will read/view a few news stories in class to see if we can identify media frames*

Robert Entman. 2004. *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. [Available in bookstore]

TUE June 2: Communications theory, public opinion & the policy process II

- *Some segments of the public pay close attention to politics and international affairs; other groups pay attention only when international politics become personally salient. Some people seek detailed information about international politics. Others are happy with what information makes it through "soft news" sources like Oprah, Entertainment Tonight or a Jay Leno monologue. We discuss the cognitive calculus of the attentive- and not-so-attentive-publics, and how the two groups get news about international affairs.*

Farhad Manjoo. 2008. *True Enough: Learning to Live in a Post-Fact Society*. New York: Wiley. [Available in bookstore.]

Lawrence, R. Jacobs and Benjamin I. Page. 2005. "Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?" *American Political Science Review* 99(1):107-23.

- *Definitions of public diplomacy; media and public diplomacy*
Browse <http://www.publicdiplomacy.org/> for information about US public diplomacy efforts.

PART II: Regional & topical case studies

THU June 4: Conflict & the media: Ethnic & environmental/ethnic disputes

- *Communications plays a key role in defining ethnic boundaries and stoking, or calming, conflicts among ethnic groups.*
Donald G. Ellis. 2006. *Transforming conflict : communication and ethno-political conflict*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield. Chapters 2, 3, 5. [Available in the bookstore]
- *What happens when the global media draw attention to local political conflict? Does that count as interference in the affairs of another nation? Do the global media have a legitimate role to play here?*
Anne Marie Todd. 2003. "Environmental Sovereignty Discourse of the Brazilian Amazon: National Politics and the Globalization of Indigenous Resistance" *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 27:4(October): 354-370

TUE June 9: Arab/Israeli conflict

- *How do parties in a political conflict attempt to play the media to their advantage? What is the difference between the strategies of the dominant and challenger parties? And do the media sometimes try to play the antagonists to their own advantage?*
Gadi Wolfsfeld. 2004. *Media and the Path to Peace*. New York: Cambridge University Press. [Available in bookstore] Chapters 1-4.

WED Jun 10: Mid-term distributed 9:00 AM. Exams due SUN Jun 14, 11:59PM.

THU June 11: Arab/Israeli conflict, Arab media

- *What is the state of the Arab language media? What is the relationship between the Arab media and Arab states? Is it an advantage, or a disadvantage, for an Arabic language media outlet to be distributed internationally? What is the relationship between language and the media's role in conflicts?*

Gadi Wolfsfeld. 2004. *Media and the Path to Peace*. Chapters 5-7 & conclusion.

Mohamed Zayani, ed., 2005. *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon*. Boulder: Paradigm [optional]

United Nations Development Program. 2003. *Building a knowledge society*. New York: UNDP.

United Nations Development Program. 2005. *Arab Human Development Report 2004*. New York: United Nations. N.B. the date discrepancy! [Both UNDP reports optional.]

TUE June 16: Media & the Rwandan genocide

- *Coverage (and non-coverage) of the Rwandan Genocide. Reporting on Darfur, NGO efforts to expose human rights violations: old and new media.*

Allan Thompson, ed. 2007. *The media and the Rwanda genocide*. Ann Arbor: Pluto Press. [Available in bookstore.]

THU June 18: Transparency & conflict; Russia, Georgia, Serbia

- *Despite the high value we place on openness and free access to information, there seem to be cases where there can be 'too much information' in cases of international conflict. When do these situations arise, and why? We'll contrast the new information age model of free flow of information with traditional, closed, diplomatic communications models.*

Kristen M. Lord. 2006. *The perils and promise of global transparency: Why the information revolution may not lead to security, democracy or peace*. Albany: SUNY Press. Chapters 1-4. [Available in bookstore.]

- *Post-Soviet journalism in Russia. The fate of independent media in Russia; media oligarchs v. Putin. Media Most & Gusinskij; Berezovskij.*

Jonathan Becker. 2004. "Lessons from Russia: A Neo-Authoritarian Media System." *European Journal of Communication*, 19, 139-163.

Ivan Zasurskii. 2004. *Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe. (optional)

TUE June 23: War coverage; CNN Effect

- *History of war reportage; military censorship; technologies & war coverage.*

Warren P. Strobel. 1996. "The CNN Effect" *American Journalism Review*. May. 33-37.

Margaret Belknap. 2002. "The CNN Effect: Strategic enabler or operational risk?" *Parameters*, XXXII (3):100-114.

W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz. 1994. *Taken by storm: the media, public opinion, and U.S. foreign policy in the Gulf War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (optional)

Daniel C. Hallin, 1986. *The "uncensored war": The media and Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (optional)

- *Embedded journalism*

Andrew Bushell and Brent Cunningham. 2003. "Being there: Suddenly the Pentagon grants access to the action but the devil's in the details." *Columbia Journalism Review* 41 (3).

THU June 25: Student presentations; Course wrap-up.

- *Students present research topics & preliminary results to the class. The purpose of the exercise is to share what students have learned, give students feedback on their projects, and force students to organize their thoughts into a brief summary.*

TBA: TERM PAPERS DUE