

**COMM 5303.001/COMM 5303.060**

**Public Opinion and Propaganda**

**Fall 2024 Syllabus**

**Class Schedule:** Tu 6-8:30 p.m.

**Room:** CAS 207B and online via Zoom

**Instructor:** Dr. Terry L. Britt

**Office hours:** Th 10 a.m.-noon and by appointment

**Office:** CAS 220

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**Course summary:** This course will be centered on the aspects, measures, and influence of public opinion and the effects and strategies behind the creation of propaganda. This course will follow a graduate seminar format with assigned readings each week for discussion and contemplation during scheduled class meetings. Additionally, research work will be integrated into the activities throughout the semester.

**Learning Outcomes**

- A. Media/Communication theory and methodology:** Students will expand their knowledge and understanding of media and communication theories pertaining to the measurement of public opinion on social, political, and cultural issues, as well as that of the creation and implementation of propagandic communication.
- B. Research applications:** Students will be able to develop and implement original research studies involving public opinion and/or effects of propaganda with an eventual goal of authoring or co-authoring academic research articles for publication.

**Assignments:**

This being a graduate course, I'm more interested in your ability to demonstrate understanding of relevant theories and concepts, and in developing application of those into original research, versus generating a laundry list of short papers and "busy work" assignments. The course grade breakdown will follow this structure:

**Readings and discussions (participation in class meetings or on discussion boards): 30%**

**Theory or concept explication paper (1,250-1,500 words): 30%** - You will choose a media theory or concept relevant to the study of public opinion and/or propagandic media. Please write in APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition style and include at least five cited academic research sources, along with other sources (textbooks, news articles, online media URLs, etc.). Deadline will be Friday, Nov. 1, by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas

**Final project: 40%**

Choose one of the following:

Group research project: I would like to lead a group research project on a public opinion topic, to be determined by you, for submission to the campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) and, once approved by the IRB, begin recruiting and working with research participants as needed. The final step is for us to produce a research article for submission to an appropriate peer-reviewed journal.

Research proposal: For those who do not wish to participate in the group research project, you may instead write an original research proposal of 10-12 pages, double-spaced, with relevant literature citations and expected findings. The research proposal should have a clear connection to public opinion issues in the United States and/or abroad, and employ justifiable research methods with cited support based on similar research studies that have been published. **Deadline will be Tuesday, Dec. 10, by 11:59 p.m. with the full paper uploaded to Canvas.**

### **Course schedule (subject to change):**

Week 1: Introductions to course and one another; concepts in this course.  
Week 2: From opinion leaders to influencers – who we listen to and why.  
Week 3: The cause, the goal, and the fear – propaganda then and now.  
Week 4: Man on the street: Public opinion polls and surveys  
Week 5: More research methods: Focus groups, interviews, and response measures  
Week 6: The body and the brain: Media psychophysiology/neuroscience and public issues  
Week 7: Echo chambers and the splintered world of current news outlets.  
Week 8: Research workshop during class time  
Week 9: Social media as public forum, Pt. 1  
Week 10: Social media as public forum, Pt. 2  
Week 11: The “Memorex effect”: Is it real or is it AI?  
Week 12: Public issues and pop culture  
Week 13: Research workshop (lab session or proposal development)  
Week 14: No meeting for Thanksgiving week  
Week 15: Research workshop (lab session or proposal development)  
Final project work due by Friday, Dec. 13.

### **Policies**

- A. **Course Withdrawal:** The last date to withdraw from Fall 2024 classes is **Monday, Nov. 4.**
- B. **Final Project Due Date: Friday, Dec. 13, 2024, 11:59 p.m.**
- C. **Electronic Devices:** Turn off all electronic devices including cell phones and MP3 players. Allowing a cell phone or other device to ring during class is rude and disrupts class. No text messaging or checking the time on your cell phone during class. Keep these devices in your backpack during class.
- D. **Use of Computers in Class:** Do not use computers during class for reading/writing e- mail, surfing the Web, playing games, working on assignments for other classes, or writing letters. You may use a laptop computer only for taking class notes. If you use your laptop for any other purpose, I will require you to immediately close the computer.

**E. Assignment Policy:**

1. Assignments will be given throughout the semester. Students are responsible for all course materials, including, but not limited to, class lectures, handouts, workbook and textbook reading assignments.
2. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.
3. Students must complete all assignments to pass the course. This does not mean that merely completing all assignments guarantees the student will pass the course.
4. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the beginning of class.
5. All papers must be typed or word-processed using the format required for the assignment.
6. Spelling, grammar, and structure are as important as the content of any written work.

**F. Late Assignments:** Late assignments are discouraged and will be assessed a penalty prior to evaluation. Assignments are due at the time and date specified.

**G. Attendance and Tardiness Policy:** Students are expected to attend class. **If you must miss a class session due to an illness (doctor or health clinic note required), funeral of an immediate family member (copy of obituary or service program required), or university-sponsored activity, please contact me as soon as possible to inform me of your expected absence.**

Three or more absences from class, unless resulting from a prolonged illness that requires the student to remain at home, will result in the deduction of one letter grade from the final course grade. See the current UT Tyler catalog for the university's policy on student responsibility for missed classes and assignments. Be familiar with the university's drop policy. Students who anticipate being absent from class due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform the instructor by the second class meeting. **Please be in attendance no later than 15 minutes from the start of a class meeting; otherwise, please notify me in advance if there is a reason you will be more than 15 minutes late in attending.**

**H. Recording of Class Sessions:** Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in this course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in this course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.

**I. Artificial Intelligence Policy:** Artificial intelligence (AI) engines, bots, or applications may not be used on assignments without prior approval from the instructor, and only then with

substantial justification and specific identification of what will be created through AI and included in the assignment submission. Under no circumstances can AI be used to deceive, significantly alter, or fabricate assignment content; violation of this policy will be treated as plagiarism and will incur penalties as allowed by university policy.