

ECO334: The Political Economy of Media

Winter 2023

Course Website: Quercus

Lectures: Wednesdays, 4:00-6:00 pm, RW 110

Instructor: Tianyi Wang

Office: Room 354, Max Gluskin House, 150 St George St

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:10-4:10 pm except during reading week

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Teaching Assistants: Walter Muiruri and Jamie Zhang

Course Objectives:

The course introduces students to the growing body of literature on the political economy of media. The course will focus primarily on empirical work and will be organized around a series of topics including but not limited to: i) the effects of media on electoral competition and public policy, ii) media bias and its determinants, iii) media and authoritarian government, iv) the impacts of media on protests, conflicts, and the spread of prejudice, v) social and economic impacts of the media, vi) media and economic development, vii) misinformation and fake news, and viii) the impacts of the Internet and social media in politics and society. The course is primarily based on the reading of research papers and the in-depth discussion of their methods and results.

Course Material:

The political economy of media, as a field, is primarily driven by research papers. As a result, the readings of each week will be primarily based on some of the seminal and cutting-edge research papers in this field. The required and recommended readings of each week will be posted on Quercus and are all available online through U of T library's website for free. In addition, I will also make the lecture slides available on Quercus.

Grade Allocation:

The grades of this course will be based on two homework assignments, one midterm, and one final exam, with the following allocation and dates:

	Percentage	Date
Homework 1	15%	Due at start of class, February 1 st
Homework 2	15%	Due at start of class, March 29 th
Midterm Test	30%	March 1 st
Final Exam	40%	TBD

Homework: the homework assignments typically consist of short-answer and/or short-essay type of questions and need to be handed in at the start of class on the due date. No late assignments will be accepted, as answers to some questions may be reviewed in class the day assignments are due.

Exams: The midterm and final exams will be based on the materials covered during the lectures. The date for the final exam will be during the final exam period and will be announced when the information becomes available.

Policy for Missed Midterms:

If you miss a midterm test because of medical or other acceptable reasons, you should report your absence through the online absence declaration. The declaration is available to students through ACORN under the Profile and Settings menu. For updates, please reference the [University policy for absence declaration](#), as this may subject to change during the time of the course. You should also email me about your absence on the day of the test. Instructors will not be automatically alerted when a student declares an absence. It is a student's responsibility to let instructors know that they have used the Absence Declaration so that you can discuss any needed consideration, where appropriate.

If deemed eligible, a student may take a make-up test, which will consist of the following: a 5-page essay worth 15% and completion of a take-home make-up test worth 15%. If the student does not complete the make-up test, there will be no "make-up make-up," consistent with the university policy, and the student will receive a zero for the test.

Re-grading Appeals

Appeal to regrade the midterm can be made one week after the midterm is returned, and no later than 2 weeks after returning the test. After this period, no request will be accepted. I may re-grade the entire test, so your grades may go up, down, or remain unchanged.

Email Policy

Please direct questions related to the course to me (instead of the TAs). In general, emails should be reserved for short questions that can be answered in about 1-2 lines. For any more substantive questions, please come to my office hours or approach me after the lecture. I'm happy to stay for a little while after class to answer any questions you may have. If you email me, please use your official UofT email account and put ECO334 in the subject line. I do not use Quercus inbox. Please also make sure that the answers are not already available in the syllabus or on UofT websites.

Crowdmark

In terms of marking the exams, we may use Crowdmark, a collaborative online grading tool for marking and providing feedback on graded term assessments. Crowdmark provides efficiencies with grading, data recording, returning term assessments and handling regrade requests. Copies

of student work marked in Crowdmark, including grading and feedback, will be available online to students for at least one year. Digital (i.e., online) copies will serve as the authoritative record for course administrative purposes, and paper copies of assessments scanned and uploaded to Crowdmark will be destroyed after the term has ended and final grades are approved. If students have questions about how your information is stored on Crowdmark, please contact your course instructor.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to adhere to the standards of academic honesty. Any student engaged in cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic dishonesty will be subjected to disciplinary action. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. The standard penalty for violations of academic integrity in this course will be an F grade for the course. It is your responsibility to check the student guide to academic honesty at <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>

Plagiarism Detection

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Students with Disabilities

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Accessibility Services](#) office.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Course Outline

This is a tentative outline of the lectures I expect to follow during the course, together with the dates for the assignments and tests. This is merely to give you an idea about the range of topics that will be covered. I update the material each year and so the set of topics is subject to change. Details on the readings will be posted on Quercus.

Date	Lecture	Topics	Assignments & Tests
11-Jan	1	Introduction	
18-Jan	2	Media and electoral competition	
25-Jan	3	Media and public policy	
01-Feb	4	Media capture and bias	HW1 due
08-Feb	5	Media and authoritarian rule	
15-Feb	6	Media and the power of the street	
		(Reading week)	
01-Mar	7	Midterm test	Midterm test
08-Mar	8	Fake news, misinformation, and political polarization	
15-Mar	9	Internet and social media	
22-Mar	10	Media, prejudice, and conflicts	
29-Mar	11	Social and economic impacts of the media	HW2 due
05-Apr	12	Media and economic development	

		Final exam period	Final exam (date TBD)
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Additional Notes:

1. You are responsible for your success in this class. I am here to help you achieve the outcome you desire for this class, but I can only give you the grade you earn. Work hard, be prepared, and don't hesitate to approach me when you need help!
2. This may be one of your first times reading rigorous research papers in economics. It is totally normal if parts of a paper (such as the econometrics) may feel confusing or downright inscrutable. Don't panic! Instead, focus on the big picture and the main takeaways, such as by reading the introduction section carefully. You may also skip the theory section (if a paper has one) and focus on the empirical part. But again, do not get bogged down by the technical details of the paper. Focus instead on the big-picture stuff, such as the research question, the data and methods used (try to get the intuition behind the methods), and the main findings. Part of the class's goal is to familiarize you with ways to consume and analyze rigorous research in social sciences.
3. Attendance is strongly encouraged, and please come on time. There is overwhelming evidence that class attendance is positively correlated with learning outcomes and GPAs. Students are responsible for all materials covered in class as well as any announcements and assignments whether they are in attendance of class or not. Students who miss a lecture should contact another student in the class to get missed lecture notes and announcements.
4. Do not be shy to come to office hours. I am happy to help and looking forward to getting to know you as well.
5. Please feel free to ask questions during or after class. If you have a question or are confused, chances are you are not alone and others would appreciate you asking that question. I am also happy to stay for a little while after each lecture to answer any questions you may have. So, please feel free to approach me then if you'd like.
6. Collaboration on homework is allowed and encouraged; however, because it is important to understand the material, you should collaborate responsibly. (You will not receive credit if you copy another student's work. You must show your work and explain your answers in your own words. Any papers identified as not meeting this standard will receive zeros.)

7. You will not receive any points for missed exams or homework without a valid excuse. You must contact me at the earliest date possible to discuss your options if you find yourself unable to take an exam.
8. Use of any electronics, such as laptops, during class time should be for academic purposes only.
9. I reserve the right to change or modify materials and procedures explained in this syllabus. An announcement will be made in class prior to any such changes.