

ECO334: The Political Economy of Media

Winter 2024

Course Website: Quercus

Lectures: Tuesdays, 10:00 am-12:00 pm, FE114

Tutorials: Selected Tuesdays only, 12:00-1:00 pm, same location above

Instructor: Tianyi Wang

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

Office Hours: Thursdays 3:30-5:30 pm

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Teaching Assistants: Dario Toman (dario.toman@mail.utoronto.ca), Dina O'Brien, Michael Scafe

Teaching Assistant (Dario's) Office Hours: Wednesdays, 9-11 am in GE313.

Course Objectives:

This course introduces students to the growing body of literature on the political economy of media. The course will focus on empirical work in the literature and explore 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 discussions of their methods and results. In addition, the course will provide students with opportunities to practice hands-on data manipulation and analysis skills, as well as writing skills.

Course Material:

The field of political economy of media is primarily driven by research papers. As a result, the readings for each week will primarily be based on some of the seminal and cutting-edge research papers in this field. We may supplement the weekly papers with additional readings in some weeks. All the required and recommended readings for each week will be posted on Quercus and are freely available online through the U of T library's website. Additionally, I will make the lecture slides available on Quercus.

Grade Allocation:

The grades of this course will be based on three data exercises, one writing assignment, one midterm, and one final exam, with the following allocation and dates:

	Date	Percentage
Data Exercise 1	Due on February 1 st	15% in total (5% each)
Data Exercise 2	Due on February 15 th	
Data Exercise 3	Due on March 21 st	
Writing Assignment	Due on March 26 th	15%
Midterm Test	February 27 th	30%
Final Exam	TBD	40%

Data exercises: the assignments provide opportunities to gain hands-on data manipulation and analysis skills using real-world media data. You will be provided with the dataset for each assignment along with a set of tasks and questions to explore and analyze the data. It is strongly recommended that you use the statistical software Stata to complete each assignment. Stata is a standard and highly useful software commonly used in economics and can be purchased online or accessed for free at the Map & Data Library computer lab inside the Robarts Library. More details regarding Stata access options are provided below. All assignments are due at 11:59 pm on the specified due dates, and no late submissions will be accepted.

Writing assignment: Writing is an important skill in life. There will be one assignment to practice your writing skills. More details on the writing assignment will be provided in the coming weeks.

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

Tutorials:

There will be several tutorials held on selected Tuesdays throughout the semester to offer additional help on Stata and course material. The dates for the tutorials are provided in the course outline table below. Additionally, you can access a helpful Stata guide that covers some of the most useful Stata commands and techniques at this link: <https://grodrigo.github.io/stata/>

Stata Software Access:

To complete the data exercises, we strongly recommend using the statistical software Stata. You can purchase a 6-month Stata/BE student license for \$48 USD (approximately \$65 CAD) at <https://www.stata.com/order/new/edu/gradplans/student-pricing/>. Alternatively, you can access Stata for free at the Map & Data Library computer lab in Robarts Library, Room 5-053, located outside the Map and Data Library reference area and across from the public elevator. More information on Stata access options is available here: <https://mdl.library.utoronto.ca/stata-software-license-request-0>.

Email Policy

For general questions related to the course or the lectures, please direct the questions 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 during the lecture break or after the lecture each week. I am 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.

For technical questions related to Stata or the data exercises, Dario Toman, the Teaching Assistant for this course, should be your first point of contact. Same as above, emails should be used for brief questions only. You may reach Dario at dario.toman@mail.utoronto.ca. For longer and more substantive questions, please attend the tutorials and the TA office hours, which would be a more effective way to get help.

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 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.

Crowdmark

This course will 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>).

Statement on Generative AI

An important goal of higher education is to learn how to think and to develop critical and creative thinking skills. To that end, Generative AI, such as ChatGPT and other similar technologies, should never replace one's original thinking or ideas. These technologies may be used as a tool to improve one's writing, such as checking grammar and proofreading, if necessary. But the final submitted assignment must be original work produced by the student.

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	Tutorial	Assignments & Tests
09-Jan	1	Introduction		
16-Jan	2	Media and electoral competition	How to read a paper	
23-Jan	3	Media and public policy	Stata workshop 1	
30-Jan	4	Media capture and bias		Data exercise 1 due on Feb 1 st
06-Feb	5	Media and authoritarian rule	Stata workshop 2	
13-Feb	6	Media and the power of the street	Midterm review	Data exercise 2 due on Feb 15 th
20-Feb		(Reading week; no lecture)		
27-Feb	7	Midterm test		Midterm test
05-Mar	8	Fake news, misinformation, and political polarization		
12-Mar	9	Internet and social media	Stata workshop 3	
19-Mar	10	Media, prejudice, and conflicts		Data exercise 3 due on Mar 21 st
26-Mar	11	Social and economic impacts of the media		Essay due on March 26 th
02-Apr	12	Media and economic development	Final review	
		Final exam period		Final exam (date TBD)

Additional Notes:

1. You are responsible for your success in this class. We are here to help you achieve the outcome you desire for this class, but we can only give you the grade you earn. Work hard, be prepared, and don't hesitate to approach us 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, I can almost guarantee that 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.