

CELEBRITY ADVOCACY

SCOPE AND SUBJECT:

This is a course investigates the intersection of fame and politics in contemporary media worlds. On the celebrity side, the course takes up the role of image, marketing, personal and political causes to show how standing up for an ideal or promoting a cause enhances status. Alternatively, we analyze how celebrity status is now granted to images of a people, styles of going public, and political causes themselves. On the politics side, the course investigates a broad range of ideological positions that inform media politics including liberalism, conservatism, socialism, nationalism, anarchism, fascism, feminism, ecologism and religious fundamentalism. The course takes a critical approach to the intersections between the business of fame and the practice of politics.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students who take this course will achieve a good working knowledge of how politics infuses itself within the domain of contemporary mass media by conjoining image and issue. Similarly, the course will examine how politics, through the voices of pundits and the attained visibility of causes, achieves celebrity status. Analytics skills are cultivated by introducing students to rhetorical analysis, case study approaches, and critique inquiry of image, discourse, political argument and event.

READINGS:

The readings for the course include Andrew Heywood. *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*. MacMillan: Palgrave, 2003. Dick Pels. *Media and the Restyling of Politics: Consumerism, Celebrity and Cynicism*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, 2003. P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. University of Minnesota, 1997. Richard Earle. *The Art of Cause Marketing*. McGraw-Hill, 2000. Daniel M. West, John M. Orman. *Celebrity Politics*. Paramus: Prentice Hall, 2002.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

The course will have three strata of assignment.

Classroom reports: Each student will make a minimum of one or two short presentations for the class. Assignments are listed on the daily seminar assignments page (see “Assignments” on syllabus). At the first class, a schedule will be set up so that each student knows his or her assignment date. On the assigned date, a case study will be presented that 1) explores the politics of celebrity topic for the evening, 2) sketches a case study of a controversy or event that is in the news, and 3) conducts an analysis of a WEB based site or other primary material that is involved in political representation. Case studies are about 5 pages, distributed to class, with short primary documents.

Pundrity or Justice Research: Since this is an election year, one of the chief focuses of the class will be on individuals who have become celebrities by virtue of the opinions they deliver on the political process. Such characters go on speaking tours, write books, appear on television programs, and otherwise visit the public with the benefit of their wisdom. Students will be asked to follow a pundit (or two) for the course of the quarter and to assemble a presentation on that pundit. Details of the presentation and case study will be provided forthcoming.

Final Examination: The final examination will be open-book. Questions will ask you to rely on your synthesis of lectures, notes, reports and examples for the quarter.

EVALUATION

The course is taught in seminar fashion. Students are expected to prepare for the seminar by doing the reading, attending to contemporary events as indicated by a weekly “prep for seminar” e-mail from the instructor, and to respond to their fellow students in evaluating the material. Participation counts 10%, Reports 20%, Major Report 40% and Final 30%

INSTRUCTOR

My office is in Annenberg School for Communication 326 D. My e-mail is gtg@usc.edu Phone 213-821-5384 Incompletes available for medical cause. Assignments due the evening scheduled. Office hours available and to be assigned.

TENTATIVE SEMINAR SCHEDULE

- 25 Aug W Seminar 1* **Course Introduction**
- 1 Sep W Seminar 2* **Celebrity Politics**
- 8 Sep W Seminar 3* **Celebrity Power**
- 15 Sep W Seminar 4* **Cause Marketing and Ideology**
- 22 Sep W Seminar 5* **Liberalism: The Personal Cause**
- 29 Sep W Seminar 6* **Conservatism: Family or Artistic Freedom**
- 6 Oct W Seminar 7* **Sexual Politics: Change Inside and Out**
- 13 Oct W Seminar 8* * **Politics, Justice and Pundits: Left/Right**
- 20 Oct W Seminar 9* * **Facism: Notoriety & Resistance**
- 27 Oct W Seminar 10* **Socialism: The People as Celebrity Hero**
- 3 Nov W Seminar 11* **Anarchism: Selling the Cynical Side of Life**
- 10 Nov W Consult* **Politics, Justice and Pundits: Consult**
- 17 Nov W Seminar 12* **Ecology: Animal Rights**
- 24 Nov W Seminar 13* **Religious Fundamentalism: Populist Style**
- 31 Nov W Seminar 14* **Catch-Up, Review, Testing Options**
- 8 Dec W Seminar 15* ***Celebrity Pundits (Final Presentations)**
- 15 Dec W Seminar 16* ***Celebrity Justice (Final Presentations)**
- * Students will chose between either Justice or Pundrity for major project.

COURSE SEMINARS

25 Aug W Seminar 1 **Course Introduction**

The initial seminar will lay out the course readings, make assignments, and provide a lecture on the rhetorical tradition. Rhetoric includes advocacy in deliberative, epideictic, and forensic contexts. The course covers the celebratory and legal senses of advocacy toward its conclusion. Its main content is directed at the varieties of political positions, strategies, and styles deployed by celebrities in prompting public controversy and deliberation.

1 Sep W Seminar 2 **Celebrity Politics**

This seminar will explore the relationship between mainstream political parties and the use of endorsements and support by famous people. Celebrity influence in issue formation, candidate choice, and ideologies will be examined.

Reading: Daniel West and John Orman, *Celebrity Politics* Sections.

Assignment: Select students will explore how politicians are using celebrity candidate endorsements and support in this election year. Conversely, the political activity of celebrities in relation to the war, ecology, and social causes will be studied.

8 Sep W Seminar 3 **Celebrity and Power**

This seminar will examine the contemporary “fame” culture, its categories, precepts, practices, and changing tastes.

Reading: P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* pp. 1-78..

Assignment: Select class members will be asked to bring in two examples of a famous person: one that is justified as famous, and one that is not, and to explain the difference.

15 Sep W Seminar 4 **Cause Marketing and Ideology**

This seminar will focus on the public sphere as a place for the advocacy of causes. The ideological and marketing approaches will be compared and differentiated, as each supplements the other in generating public attention, participation, and change. Rhetorical analysis directed toward case studies will be explained.

Reading: Andrew Heywood. *Political Ideologies*, 1-23. Richard Earle. *The Art of Cause Marketing* pp. 15-161.

Assignment: Select students will explore groups that stand for a cause such as Green Peace, Earth First, NRA, and Decency groups. Critical analysis will be accorded the confluence of political passion and smart producing a persuasive WEB presence.

22 Sep W Seminar 5 **Liberalism: The Personal Cause**

This seminar will identify classical liberal values. The class will identify types of causes associated with celebrities including Rosie O'Donnell, Christopher Reeve, Michael J. Fox, Bono, and Katie Couric.

Readings: Andrew Heywood. *Political Ideologies*, 25-68. P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*, 79-184.

Assignment: Select students will be asked to perform a rhetorical analysis of WEB sites posted by stars who champion a foundation, comparing and contrasting the style of film, television, and music celebrities.

29 Sep W Seminar 6 **Conservatism: Family Values**

The advertising council has engaged in a number of campaigns to rid Americans of its bad habits, or at least modify them. The “politics of the supplement,” leads to Just Say No discourse where traditional values are reinforced. How do celebrities interact with the reformed person to create a better citizenry?

Readings: Andrew Heywood. *Political Ideologies*, 26-104. Richard Earle. *The Art of Cause Marketing*, 169-253.

Assignment: Select students will be asked to analyze a public campaign to improve the health, morality, or consciousness of the citizenry, e.g. the

use of the Marlboro man in anti-smoking campaigns. Richard Earle. *The Art of Cause Marketing*, pp. 165-239.

6 Oct W Seminar 7 **Sexual Politics: Change Inside and Out**

The stars have been involved with leading a variety of crusades concerning sex and gender, equality and difference in its variety of forms. This seminar examines the interplay of sexual politics and the current political election.

Readings. Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, 240-266. Dick Pels: *Media and the Restyling of Politics: Consumerism, Celebrity and Cynicism*, pp. 99-116. Kathryn Olson, *Thelma and Louise* essay.

Assignment: Select students will present a case study of an intersection between sexual politics and the current presidential campaign.

13 Oct W Seminar 8 **Politics, Pundits, and Justice:**

Punditry makes celebrities out of news commentators and opinion forgers. This class will discuss the role of right and left wing pundits and their media presentations as they comment on the characters, issues and prospects of the election as well as social norms and issues of justice in American life.

Readings: Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, 155-187
P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*, 203-247.

Supplements provided on Blackboard for the Election

Assignment: Students will be divided up in teams to provide an outline and work with each other on a “consulting” exercise for the final project. Students should bring ideas of moral issues, pundits, trials that they would like to create for a final presentation

20 Oct W Seminar 9 **Fascism: Notoriety & Resistance**

One of the misfortunes of contemporary times is that individuals attain celebrity by performing notorious deeds. These celebrities are associated with genocide, evil, or terrorism. How does the media frame such character? What political purposes are served by such figuration?

Readings: Andrew Heywood. *Political Ideologies*, 214-240
Kathryn Olson. “Reagan at Bittburg” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (Article).

Assignment: Select students will present a profile of a fascist leader who has attained notoriety and analyzes the way the person is depicted and reviled. Alternatively, a figure of resistance to fascism will be analyzed.

27 Oct W Seminar 10 **Socialism: The People as Celebrity Hero**

The media has presented ordinary human suffering or random human fortune as a kind of celebrityhood—of individuals and of peoples. This seminar focuses on images and constructions of “the people” as such play influential roles in politics.

Readings: Andrew Heywood. *Political Ideologies*, 105-154.
Michael McGee “The People.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (article)

Assignment: Select students will be asked to assemble a montage of “the people” as a subject that is presented as attaining “celebrity” standing. Fortune and misfortune along generational, ethnic, or class lines will be emphasized.

3 Nov W Seminar 11 **Anarchism: Selling the Cynical Side of Life**

Celebrities include the “bad boy” side of contemporary culture. This seminar looks at the stand-ins for cultures of rebellion that are presented by Hollywood, Madison Ave. and other sources of celebrity culture. Similarly, skepticism is directed toward national institutions, and these larger than life figures serve as larger than life surrogates.

Readings. Andrew Heywood. *Political Ideologies* 188-213
Dick Pels: *Media and the Restyling of Politics: Consumerism, Celebrity and Cynicism*—selections.
G. Thomas Goodnight. “The Park, the Firm, the University.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* Article.

Assignment: Select students will provide case studies in the conjunction of celebrity as an “outsider” or rebel to the system.

10 Nov W Consultation Meetings **Politics, Pundits and Justice**

Students will meet informally in groups to create a “story board” outline of their power point presentation for the final project. These story boards will include outlines of

the project, its strategy, objectives, and substantive arguments. Students will be asked to consult on at least one other project in an exercise that leads toward the final presentation.

17 Nov W Seminar 12 **Ecology: Animal Rights**

Ecology has made a celebrity of certain of our friends in nature. Moreover, the careers of major actors have been sustained by affiliation with PETA and Alf. This section examines the conjunction between celebrity and nature.

Readings: Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, 266-291. Dick Pels: *Media and the Restyling of Politics: Consumerism, Celebrity and Cynicism*, pp. 190-204. Kathryn Olson and G. Thomas Goodnight, “Entanglements of Fashion, Cruelty, Consumption and Fur” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Article.

Assignment: Select students will present images of the proper and improper uses of fur, as animals become celebrities in the battle for larger ecological goals.

24 Nov W Seminar 13 **Religious Fundamentalism: Populist Style**

Religious figures now wear the mantle of celebrity. Occasionally, the religious figures represent fundamentalist movements or politics. What are the varieties of religious celebrities presented by the media? What sort of politics do they support?

Readings: Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies*, 292-317. Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics.”

Assignment: Select students will present a religious celebrity; identify the stylistic features of the discourse, the politics supported, and whether or not the religious figure departs from or substantively embodies the fundamentalist world view.

31 Nov W Seminar 14 Catch-Up and Review. Examination Options: In Class Open Book-Take Home discussions.

*8 Dec W Seminar 15 *Celebrity Pundits (Final Projects)*

Prominent sports and entertainment figures these days are subject to trials and other institutional proceedings. How do these affect celebrity hood? How are the moral dramas presented?

Assignment: Students will present analysis of pundits on the right or to the left, their style, issues, and ideology.

*15 Dec W Seminar 16 *Celebrity Justice (Final Projects)*

One feature of celebrity advocacy is campaigns for awards, either for performers or their artistic products. This seminar will examine the way celebrity careers, milestones and artistic products are celebrated—and contested.

Assignment: : Select students will examine specific aspects of a celebrity trial, and conduct a rhetorical analysis of either a television program or web site devoted to the trial.

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the SCampus Guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

“Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.”