

## POU44674 – Mass Media and Politics

| Module Information |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Module Code        | POU44674                |
| Module Title       | Mass Media and Politics |
| Department         | Political Science       |
| Year Group         | Senior Sophister        |
| Module Personnel   | Liam Kneafsey           |
| Academic Year      | 2026–27                 |
| Credit Weighting   | 5 ECTS                  |
| Semester           | Semester 2              |
| Contact Hours      | Weekly seminars         |

| Module Content       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| Module Description   | <p>This module investigates the role of media in political and social life. It examines how mass and digital media shape political attitudes and behaviour, exploring the relationship between media and government, processes of news production, media effects on public opinion and voting behaviour, declining trust in journalism, and the sweeping changes transforming the information landscape. Topics include social media platforms, algorithmic curation, generative AI, synthetic media, the collapse of local journalism, platform governance, and epistemic fragmentation. The module combines theoretical, experimental, and content-analytic approaches to understand how media coverage is produced and its downstream consequences for public opinion, political behaviour, and policy.</p> |
| Module Learning Aims | <p>To provide students with a rigorous grounding in the empirical literature on media effects; to develop critical tools for analysing the rapidly evolving information environment; and to examine the relationship between citizens, media, and political power across both classic and contemporary dimensions of political communication.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

## Module Content

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| <b>Learning Outcomes</b>              | On successful completion of this module, students will be able to: critically evaluate theoretical and empirical literature on media effects and political communication; analyse the processes of news production and the factors shaping media coverage; assess the impact of media consumption on public opinion, voting behaviour, and political attitudes; engage with debates on misinformation, platform power, and epistemic fragmentation; and apply conceptual frameworks from the module to contemporary developments in the Irish, European, and international media landscape.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Indicative Reading / Resources</b> | <p>Example texts and readings drawn from the module reading list:</p> <p>Guess, A.M. et al. 2023. 'How Do Social Media Feed Algorithms Affect Attitudes and Behavior in an Election Campaign?' <i>Science</i> 381(6656): 398–404.</p> <p>Goldstein, J.A. et al. 2024. 'How Persuasive Is AI-Generated Propaganda?' <i>PNAS Nexus</i> 3(2): pgae034.</p> <p>Li, Yanlin, Zicheng Cheng, and Homero Gil de Zuñiga. 2025. 'TikTok's Political Landscape: Examining Echo Chambers and Political Expression Dynamics.' <i>New Media &amp; Society</i>.</p> <p>Bennett, W. Lance, Regina G. Lawrence, and Steven Livingston. 2007. <i>When the Press Fails: Political Power and the News Media from Iraq to Katrina</i>. University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>Gillespie, Tarleton. 2021. <i>Custodians of the Internet</i>. Yale University Press</p> <p>Full weekly reading lists (required, recommended, and Watch &amp; Listen) are provided in the module syllabus and on Blackboard.</p> |

## Assessment

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| <b>Assessment Components</b> | Participation 10%   Essay 35%   Research Paper 55%                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Assessment Details</b>    | The module includes larger written assignments for which the extended reading list provides additional recommended resources. Further details on assessment will be provided at the start of the module. |



| Additional Information |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| Prerequisites          | <i>None</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Co-requisites          | <i>None</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Any other information  | The module is structured around weekly participatory seminars. Students are expected to complete required readings before each seminar and to draw on their own consumption of news and current affairs. Active engagement in seminar discussion forms an integral part of the module. |