

**MC 2971**  
**Media and Election 2020**  
**Asynchronous & 100% Online**  
**Fall 2020**

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Office hours on Zoom: <https://lsu.zoom.us/j/5394188520> [Waiting Room Enabled]

- Tuesday 1-3 PM CT
- Wednesday 10 AM – 12 PM CT

During these times, you can ask about assignments or course content. You may also email me to set up an individual appointment.

### **Course Overview**

The 2020 election, featuring Republican nominee President Donald J. Trump and Democratic nominee Joseph R. Biden, Jr., comes at a pivotal time in American history: the world is dealing with a pandemic that has hit the United States particularly hard, racial justice is at the top of voters' minds following a summer of protests and activism, and the economy is struggling to recover from its precipitous decline in the spring. On top of this, American government and its voters are deeply divided along partisan lines, and the nation is poised to radically change the way it votes by mail and in person in response to the pandemic. Americans look to the media to make sense of these complicated times yet trust the media (and politicians) less than ever.

In this course, we will examine the strategies, norms, behaviors, and institutional constraints faced by the media, campaigns, and voters, all through the lens of the 2020 election. This campaign will be the most reliant on the media and communications technology of any in history, due to the constraints on in-person events and voter mobilization. We will track how media and campaigns are changing their approach to the election while drawing on lessons from history and social scientific findings about political communication. We will hear from an array of guest speakers with experience in campaigns and political media. By the end of the course, when the election will (probably) be settled, we will be able to analyze and evaluate the performance of the media and the effectiveness of the candidates' strategies.

### **Course Structure**

This course will be offered in a 100% online format. All activities are completed within Moodle. There will be regular and substantive engagement in the form of a discussion board, posting articles from news sources, and regular communication with the professor and with each other.

### **Credit Hour and Engaged Learning Time Expectations**

LSU's general policy states that for each credit hour, you should plan to spend about 45 hours of combined "in-class" and "out-of-class" time working on course related activities such as viewing and interacting with instructional materials, activities and assignments, assigned readings, research, or study time. A sixteen-week, three-credit hour course typically requires around 9 hours of student work per week.

## Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply their knowledge of political media to interpreting coverage of the 2020 election.
- Analyze the strategies of political and media actors in determining the agenda and framing of news leading up to the 2020 election.
- Understand the rules and regulations governing the U.S. voting and electoral system, particularly in key states, during the unique circumstances of the 2020 election.
- Understand past presidential elections and how they are relevant to current politics.
- Evaluate the 2020 election, particularly voting processes and media coverage, according to the standards of fairness, freedom, and unbiasedness.

## Required Materials

- Sides, John, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossmann, and Keena Lipsitz. (2019). Campaigns and Elections: 3rd Edition, 2018 Election Update. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. [CE on the syllabus].
- Regularly posted articles to Moodle from major media sources about the 2020 election. It is your responsibility to check Moodle regularly and read these articles.

In addition to the articles posted online and required textbook (see below), students should follow the elections carefully in reputable national news source (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, etc.). Politico, Axios, and other major national news outlets offer daily newsletters about the campaign as well. You will be expected to know current events in the 2020 campaign as the fall unfolds.

As LSU students, you have access to online subscriptions for the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* for free. I will proceed as though you have activated these subscriptions and assign articles from both sources. Please follow the instructions below to obtain your login credentials.

- *New York Times*: <https://guides.lib.lsu.edu/NYT>
- *Wall Street Journal*: <https://guides.lib.lsu.edu/wallstreet>

## Technical Information

Moodle runs on Windows, Linux, iOS, Android, or any device with a web browser. For information on browsers, please visit the LSU [ITS Web Browser Recommendation](#) page. Google Chrome and Firefox are the recommended browsers for Moodle 3.7 at LSU. We also recommend that you have Adobe Flash installed and enabled, and that Javascript is enabled.

## Grading Scheme & Course Work

Your grade in this course will be determined by the specific activities and assessments described in this syllabus. In the following sections you will find details about each type of activity and assessment, as well as the grade breakdown and grading scale. Specific expectations for each graded item are included within these sections.

Final grades will be computed from the following activities:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Percentage of Final Grade</b>
Discussion Forums	10%
Quizzes	20%
Short Essays	20%
Group Projects	20%
Final Exam (cumulative)	30%

### **Discussion Forums**

Throughout the course you will participate in discussion forums where you will respond to a prompt asking you to demonstrate critical thinking about the concepts presented in the module and engage in conversations with peers.

### **Quizzes**

Each module contains short quizzes [ten questions, multiple choice or true/false] that will test your knowledge of the information covered in the module. There will be 11 quizzes total, and your lowest grade will be dropped. These quizzes serve as checkpoints to gauge your progress toward achieving the course outcomes. Quizzes will be posted on Moodle in the respective modules. You can take the quiz once, and you will be given 15 minutes. Your quiz will be automatically graded, and you will see your score after you submit. You will be able to review your answers when you are finished.

### **Short Essays**

Throughout the course you will be asked to submit two short writing assignments to apply key concepts and show mastery of course outcomes. Prompts will be posted to Moodle at the appropriate times in the course.

#### *Purpose of the Assignment*

Assignments will ask you to use the course readings to interpret the behavior of media, politicians, and campaign professionals in the context of the 2020 election. You will be assessed on the clarity and structure of your writing, and your ability to back up your claims with evidence.

#### *Submission Guidelines*

Written assignments will be submitted as TurnItIn activities on Moodle. These short essays will be exactly two pages, double-spaced, not including a bibliography.

#### *Directions*

More detailed instructions for completing and submitting your assignment can be found by clicking on the assignment title in the module.

### **Group Projects**

Students are expected to complete two group projects this semester. One will require students to do an in-depth study of a 2018 Senate campaign (Project 1), working in groups randomly assigned by the instructor. The other, after Election Day, will require students to analyze

election-night coverage by national and local media (Project 2), in different randomly assigned groups. More detailed prompts for these assignments will be distributed at least three weeks in advance of the due dates (see schedule).

*Purpose of the Assignment*

Projects will encourage students to work together to apply their knowledge of the course to analyzing actual elections and media coverage of election night 2020.

*Submission Guidelines*

Projects will be emailed to the professor by the stated date and time.

*Directions*

More detailed instructions for completing and submitting your assignment, and other important information or files, can be found by clicking on the project title in the relevant module.

**Final Exam**

Carefully read the following information, which is also listed in the exam module in your course. Navigate to the exam module when you are ready to take your exam. The exam will be conducted in Moodle and is open-note.

*Content*

The final exam will be taken in Moodle and will be cumulative. It will be a combination of multiple-choice, true-false, and short-answer essay questions. The final exam will take place on Thursday, December 10, between 12:30 PM and 2:30 PM, as required by LSU’s final exam schedule.

*Testing Rules*

- The exam is open book, though sources must be properly cited in short-answer questions.
- Working with other students is absolutely prohibited. Any coordination between students during the test will result in a grade of zero for the exam.
- Short answer questions will include a rubric.

LSU letter grades will be assigned according to this scale.

97.00 and above	A+	80.00–82.99	B-	63.00–66.99	D
93.0 – 96.99	A	77.00–79.99	C+	60.00–62.99	D-
90.00–92.99	A-	73.00–76.99	C	59.99 and below	F
87.00–89.99	B+	70.00–72.99	C-		
83.00–86.99	B	67.00–69.99	D+		

**Engagement and Participation**

Please check into your Moodle course frequently. Participation obligations involve specific points of engagement in course activities and interaction with other course members. Your active engagement in discussion forums or other required collaborative activities constitutes your participation in this course. You are expected to contribute and collaborate according to the requirements of the specific activities and assessments described in this syllabus.

Timely communication is an e-learning best practice. Check your LSU email and the News and Announcements Forum in Moodle daily to make sure you do not miss any communications from your instructor or classmates. Contact the instructor in advance if you are going to miss an assignment or turn in work late. This will give the instructor sufficient time to allow for discussing an alternative schedule.

### **Academic Engagement Activity**

Federal Financial Aid regulations require the confirmation of course participation in order for students to receive federal aid. The confirmation of attendance is achieved by students completing an academic engagement activity (AEA) in module 1 in Moodle by the census date (last day to add courses for credit or change sections). Failure to complete the activity by the specified due date may result in a delay in the disbursement of financial aid funds. Another required academic activity is due on the last day of class to ensure participation throughout the course duration.

### **Technology**

Distribution or public discussion of the recorded lectures, interviews, and other original course materials, or their content, is strictly prohibited.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students must comply with the LSU Code of Student Conduct. *Academic misconduct* includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and/or any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student. Preventing academic misconduct requires learners to take ownership of their individual work for individual assignments and assessments. Students who violate the LSU Code of Student Conduct will be referred to Student Advocacy & Accountability. For undergraduate students, a first academic violation could result in a zero grade on the assignment or failing the class and disciplinary probation until graduation. For a second academic violation, the result could be suspension from LSU. For graduate students, suspension is the appropriate outcome for the first offense. To read more, please visit the [LSU Code of Student Conduct page](#).

### **Plagiarism and Citation Method**

If you use material from a source (either one assigned from this class or something you've retrieved through outside research), you must cite it. Consistent with the norms of the fields of communication and political science, I will ask that you use parenthetical citations in your written work. Citations must include the author(s) last names and the year of publication.

### **Unauthorized Assistance**

All work must be completed without assistance unless explicit permission for group or partner work is given by the faculty member. This is critical so that the professor can assess your performance on each assignment. Read the syllabus and assignment directions carefully. When in doubt, e-mail your instructors or ask in the Q&A forum. Seeking clarification is your responsibility as a student. Assuming group or partner work is okay without permission constitutes a violation of the LSU Code of Student Conduct.

### **Online Etiquette**

Communication in the online classroom comes across differently than the communication we are accustomed to through academic writing and face-to-face classroom discussion. Please review the [Online Etiquette Guide](#) and refer to these guidelines to craft your communication.

### **Resources for Students**

Your health and safety are LSU's top priority. If you are feeling ill or overwhelmed with anxiety, please contact the LSU Student Health Center for medical advice and mental health support. General health care and mental health support are available for all enrolled students through telehealth appointments.

### **Unexpected Changes to Courses**

Due to the unpredictable nature of the situation, the format of the course and/or requirements may be forced to change, and if this is the case that students will be given appropriate notification.

### **Accessibility**

A student with a disability is entitled by law to equal access to university programs. Two federal laws protect persons with disabilities in post-secondary education: the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Pub. L. No. 93-112, as amended), the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (Pub. L. No. 101-336) and the ADA Amendments Act (Pub. L. No.110-325). LSU A&M is committed to ensuring that its websites, online courses, and all online materials are accessible to people with disabilities. If you have accessibility needs that we can help with, visit the [LSU Disability Services page](#) and register for accommodations before you begin your course work. If you notice that your course contains material that is not accessible, please contact your instructor directly to discuss accommodations.

### **Diversity Statement**

Diversity is fundamental to LSU's mission and the University is committed to creating and maintaining a living and learning environment that embraces individual difference. Cultural inclusion is of highest priority. LSU recognizes that achieving national prominence depends on the human spirit, participation, and dedicated work of the entire university community. Through its Commitment to Community, LSU strives to create an inclusive, respectful, intellectually challenging climate that embraces individual difference in race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, age, spirituality, socioeconomic status, disability, family status, experiences, opinions, and ideas. LSU proactively cultivates and sustains a campus environment that values open dialogue, cooperation, shared responsibility, mutual respect, and cultural competence—the driving forces that enrich and enhance cutting-edge research, first-rate teaching, and engaging community outreach activities.

**[COURSE SCHEDULE ON NEXT PAGE]**

## Course Outline & Schedule

This is a course about media reporting on current events. As such, it will involve extensive reading of current news articles from respected sources. These readings will be included in Moodle Modules as they emerge throughout the campaign. As such, only the textbook readings are included in the outline below, along with the general topics to be discussed in each section. In short – this is not an exhaustive list of the assigned readings in the course. Please check the current Moodle Module for updated readings from current events.

100% Online: All content is delivered online through Moodle.			
Module	Dates	Topics and Textbook Readings (Additional Readings and Guest Speakers <b>in Moodle</b> )	Assignments and Due Dates Discussion Board = DB Quiz = Q# Short Essay = SE
M1: Introduction	8/24 – 9/4	Syllabus, course overview. RNC and DNC (conventions) Past presidential elections. <b>CE ch. 3.</b>	Syllabus quiz (Q0): due 8/28 Q1: due 9/4 DB
M2: Rules	9/8 – 9/18	Mail-in voting. Federalized elections. Money in politics. <b>CE ch. 2, 4, 7.</b>	Q2: due 9/11 Q3: due 9/18 DB SE1: due 9/16
M3: Campaigns	9/21 – 10/9	Campaign effects. Campaign management. Strategies and resource allocation. Ads/negative ads. <b>CE ch. 9, 5, 6, 12, 13.</b>	Q4: due 9/25 Q5: due 10/2 DB Q6: due 10/9
M4: Media	10/12 – 10/30	Covering polls. Earned media. Misinformation. Social media platforms. <b>CE ch. 8.</b>	Group Project 1: due 10/16 Q7: due 10/23 Q8: due 10/30 DB
M5: Election Week	11/2 – 11/6	Vote counting and calling states. Election night.	DB SE2: due 11/12
M6: What Comes Next?	11/9 – 11/25	Democratic legitimacy. Covering the results.	Q9: due 11/13 Q10: due 11/20 DB Group Project 2: due 11/23
Module 7: Assessing Institutions	11/30 – 12/4	Election postmortems. Does media serve democracy? <b>CE ch. 14.</b>	DB
Final Exam	12/10	Cumulative	Multiple Choice + Short Essay 12/10, 12:30-2:30 PM (Moodle)

# THE 1, 2, 3s of a Manship EDUCATION

## 1 Values

- Freedom of Expression and understanding the range of systems of freedom around the world
- Historical roles of media institutions and individuals in society
- Ethical ways of pursuing truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- Diversity of ideas, viewpoints and experiences domestically and globally

- Understand and apply theories in presenting visual and written information
- Ability to think analytically, creatively and independently
- Use, conduct and evaluate research
- Understand and apply statistical information
- Use technology and current tools of the profession

## Knowledge 2

## 3 Sharing of Information

- Writing clearly and accurately
- Editing and critically evaluating own work and the work of others

**Believe it. Know it. Share it.**

# Manship School of Mass Communication

# WRITING ESSENTIALS

Writing skills are essential for all of our students, and writing is a skill to be developed in all courses offered in the Manship School of Mass Communication. Manship faculty will evaluate student writing with consideration for these fundamental writing concepts.

<b>WORD CHOICE</b>	<p>The following words are often confused or misused in writing. Make sure you understand the difference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accept, except</li> <li>• a lot</li> <li>• all right</li> <li>• affect, effect</li> <li>• among, between</li> <li>• anxious, eager</li> <li>• because, since</li> <li>• due to, because of</li> <li>• farther, further</li> <li>• fewer, less</li> <li>• its, it's</li> <li>• media (plural), medium (singular)</li> <li>• principal, principle</li> <li>• stationary, stationery</li> </ul>	
<b>ACTIVE/PASSIVE VOICE</b>	<p>English sentences have three basic elements: a subject, a verb, and an object. In active voice sentences, the verb is the action element of the sentence, the subject is the "doer" of the action, and the object is the recipient of the action. In passive voice sentences, the subject is not "doer" of the action; the object becomes the "doer" of the action. These sentences flip-flop the subject and the object. In general, active voice sentences are preferred because they focus the reader's attention on the "doer of the action." Active voice is also more concise because it usually involves fewer words. Although there are situations where passive voice is proper, reliance on passive voice produces a cumbersome text.</p>	<p><b>Active:</b> The executive committee <u>approved</u> the new policy.</p> <p><b>Passive:</b> The new policy <u>was approved</u> by the executive committee.</p>
<b>ANTECEDENT/ PRONOUN AGREEMENT</b>	<p>A pronoun usually refers to something earlier in the text (its <u>antecedent</u>) and must agree in number — singular/plural — with that to which it refers. A pronoun's antecedent may be either a noun or another pronoun, but it <i>must</i> be clear what the antecedent is in either case.</p> <p>A pronoun should have only one possible antecedent. If there is more than one possible antecedent for a personal pronoun in a sentence, make sure that the pronoun refers only to one of them:</p>	<p><b>Incorrect:</b> If a student loses their books, they should go to lost and found.</p> <p><b>Correct:</b> If students lose their books, they should go to lost and found.</p> <p><b>Incorrect:</b> Jerry called Steve 12 times while he was in Reno.</p>

	<p>Also, please note that countries and organizations are NOT people. In a sentence in which a country or organization is the subject, the second reference is to “it” (singular) and “its” (singular possessive).</p>	<p><b>Rationale:</b> The pronoun "he" could refer either to "Jerry" or to "Steve."   <b>Incorrect:</b> McDonald’s cancelled all of their advertising, and they later regretted doing so.  <b>Correct:</b> McDonald’s cancelled all of its advertising, and it later regretted doing so.</p>
<p><b>PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION</b></p>	<p>An article or a preposition applying to all the members of a series must be used either before the first term or be repeated before each term.</p> <p>Correlative expressions (both, and; not, but; not only, but also; either, or; first, second, third; and the like) should be followed by the same grammatical construction.</p> <p>When making comparisons, the things you compare should be couched in parallel structures whenever that is possible and appropriate.</p>	<p><b>Incorrect:</b> The French, the Italians, Spanish and Portuguese  <b>Correct:</b> The French, the Italians, the Spanish and the Portuguese</p> <p><b>Incorrect:</b> It was both a long ceremony and very tedious.  <b>Correct:</b> The ceremony was both long and tedious.</p> <p><b>Incorrect:</b> My income is smaller than my wife.  <b>Correct:</b> My income is smaller than my wife's.</p>
<p><b>ATTRIBUTION/ CITING</b></p>	<p>Presenting ideas and phrases from another writer as your own is plagiarism and is unacceptable.</p> <p>In journalistic writing, attribution is indicating your source for a piece of information. You must attribute any judgment or opinion statements. You should not attribute known facts.</p>	
<p><b>PUNCTUATION OF QUOTES</b></p>	<p>Commas and periods always go inside quotation marks. Semi-colons and colons do not go inside quotation marks. If a statement ends in a quoted <u>question</u>, allow the question mark within the quotation marks to end the sentence. On the other hand, if a question ends with a quoted statement that is <u>not</u> a question, the question mark will go outside the closing quotation mark.</p>	<p>“I like to go swimming,” she said, “but I am afraid of getting sunburned.”</p> <p>May asked her daughter, "Who are you going out with tonight?"</p> <p>Who said, "Fame means</p>

		when your computer modem is broken, the repair guy comes out to your house a little faster"?
<b>SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT</b>	Singular subjects need singular verbs; plural subjects need plural verbs. Collective nouns (herd, team, board, faculty, etc.) take singular verbs.	My brother <u>is</u> a nutritionist. My sisters <u>are</u> mathematicians.
<b>PREPOSITIONS</b>	A preposition describes a relationship between other words in a sentence. Examples are: after, at, beside, between, during, into, on, with, etc. In everyday speech we often use prepositions where they are not necessary. Eliminate unnecessary prepositions, particularly those at the end of sentences.	The book fell off <del>of</del> the desk. Where did they go <del>to</del> ? Where is your college <del>at</del> ?

**For more help with writing style, the following Web sites and books are recommended:**

The Guide to Grammar and Writing - <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

*Latest edition of* Strunk, W., White, E. & Angell, R. *The Elements of Style*, Longman.

*Latest edition of* The Associated Press *Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*