

**POL378H1F / AMS312H1F**  
**Media, Politics, and 2022 Midterm Elections in the USA**

**Instructor:** Prof. Tanenhaus  
**Teaching Assistants:** TBA  
**Administrative Support:** TBA  
**Lecture Location:** SS 2110  
**Office Hours:** Thursdays 1:30-3:00 pm (by appointment)  
**Office Location:** TBA  
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**Lecture schedule and delivery mode:**

Weekly two-hour lecture. Lectures will be held in-person on Thursdays, 11 am – 1 pm, per the meeting schedule. Attendance and participation during the lecture is a component of the course's assessment.

**Calendar Description**

An introduction to the field of comparative politics. Content in any given year depends on instructor.

**Information Specific to the Fall 2022 Course:**

The 2022 U.S. elections will answer two all-important questions: (1) which of the two major parties will gain control of one or both chambers of Congress—the House of Representatives and the Senate; and (2) which party will prevail in each of the 36 states that will also elect governors and other state-wide leaders. Most agree the stakes are the highest in modern memory—perhaps since the Civil War of 1861-1865. Why? One reason is the extreme polarization of American voters, who are profoundly, and at times violently, divided over many major issues: from gun control, reproductive rights, and voter eligibility to “culture wars” over grade-school curriculums, race and gender identity, and the Covid pandemic. These enmities grow more intense because of the commanding influence of media, especially social media, and also to the powerful influence of one person who is *not* on any ballot in 2022 but dominates all political discussion and debate—former president Donald Trump, who continues to claim the 2020 presidential election, which he lost to President Joe Biden, was “rigged” and “stolen” and has indicated he intends to run again in 2024 to resume his mission to “Make America Great Again.” The midterm elections will be the first national referendum on Trump’s claims, on Biden’s presidency, and on the standing of the two parties they lead. In this course, we will study the midterms elections as they unfold through a close examination of political media and its many platforms, including “legacy” print media (books, magazines, newspapers), TV and radio, as well as social

media. Our goal is to gain a clearer understanding of the dynamics that drive—and divide—American politics in the 21st century. 2

### **Required Texts**

All readings will be available through the Quercus course-shell available via the University of Toronto Learning Portal (<https://weblogin.utoronto.ca>).

### **Quercus**

This syllabus, the readings for the course other than those provided directly to students in class, and other important information on assignments and deadlines will be posted on Quercus. Students should regularly consult the course-shell for scheduling changes, relevant assigned readings and assignments pertaining to the lecture.

### **Assessment**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Value</b>
Participation	All term	10%
First paper: Profile of a Candidate	Sept. 22	20%
Second paper: Media Decoder	Oct. 13	20%
Third paper: Whose Truth Is It?	Nov. 3	20%
Final paper: Crystal Ball	Dec.1	30%

### **Description of Assignments**

More detailed information will be provided in advance of each submission date; here is a brief explanation of each assignment.

- **“Profile of a Candidate” (20%)** Choose a candidate for office from those we have discussed and explain what is at stake in his/her/their election.
- **“Media Decoder” (20%)** Choose any news platform—newspaper, magazine, or website—discussed in class or another you have been following and assess and analyze its approach to the news and what biases it presents and conceals.
- **“Whose Truth Is It?” (20%)** Show how either the candidate you profiled in Assignment #1 or another who has engaged your interest has defined himself/herself/themselves through conflict with a particular media outlet or personality.
- **“Crystal Ball” (30%)** Midterm elections often predict the next presidential election two years later. Choose one state or local campaign that is attracting national attention and lay out the lessons those voters and their choices tell us about where American democracy is today and where it may be leading in the next presidential election and even beyond. This assignment combines the two

main areas we have been exploring and how they intersect to give shape to U.S. 3  
democracy in our current moment.

- **Participation (10%)** involves your weekly attendance to the weekly lecture, and making thoughtful and productive contributions during the lecture.

**There is no final assessment in this course.**

### **Learning Resources and Student Support**

Please consult the Faculty of Arts and Science's extensive information regarding Academic Advising and Support for Current Students, available via this link:  
<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/>

For more information about Accessibility Services, please follow this link:  
<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>

For more information about Academic Integrity, please follow this link:  
<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students>

### **Other Course/Instructor Policies**

If absent from class, please log your absence in ACORN using the absence declaration online tool. This tool should be used in all cases of absence from academic participation if you require consideration of missed academic work. After using this tool, please contact the instructor and course staff to request specific accommodation.

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Emails will be answered between 9 AM and 5 PM, Monday-Friday.

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Assignments must be submitted via Quercus. Late penalties are 3% per day. No extensions.

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**FALL 2022 SCHEDULE OF REQUIRED READINGS AND TOPICS**

**General recommended media:**

Print/Online Publications:

*New York Times*

*Vox*

*Politico*

*Washington Post*

*New Yorker*

*Atlantic*

Podcasts:

*The Daily (New York Times)*

*Know Your Enemy*

Broadcast News:

*PBS Newshour*

(available on YouTube)

*Throughout the term, articles related to the U.S. election news cycle will be posted on Quercus. Students are expected to read these articles.*

**Week 1      September 8                      Lecture 1**

**Week 2      September 15                      Lecture 2**

Alex Ssenstadt, “How Team Trump systematically snuffed out Liz Cheney's reign in Congress,” *Politico*, August 16, 2022.

Jane Mayer, “State Legislatures Are Torching Democracy,” *New Yorker*, August 6, 2022.

**Week 3      September 22                      Lecture 3**

- Assignment #1 Profile of a Candidate due

**Week 4      September 29                      Lecture 4**

Charlotte Alter, “‘Change Is Closer Than We Think.’ Inside Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Unlikely Rise,” *Time*, March 21, 2019.

Evan Osnos, “The Man Who Controls the Senate,” *New Yorker*, June 21, 2021.

**Week 5      October 6                      Lecture 5**

**Week 6      October 13                      Lecture 6**

Andrew Marantz, “Does Hungary Offer a Glimpse of Our Authoritarian Future?”  
*New Yorker*, June 27, 2022.

James Pogue, “Inside the New Right, Where Peter Thiel is Placing His Biggest  
Bets,” *Vanity Fair*, April 20, 2022.

- Assignment # 2 Media Decoder due

**Week 7      October 20                      Lecture 7**

**Week 8      October 27                      Lecture 8**

Sam Adler-Bell, “The Violent Fantasies of Blake Masters,” *New York Times*,  
August 3, 2022.

Dexter Filkins, “Can Ron DeSantis Displace Donald Trump as the G.O.P.’s  
Combatant-in-Chief?” *New Yorker*, June 20, 2022.

**Week 9      November 3                      Lecture 9**

- Assignment #3 Whose Truth Is It? due

**Week 10      November 17                      Lecture 10**

**Week 11      November 24                      Lecture 11**

**Week 12      December 1                      Lecture 12**

Nick Burns, “New York’s Hipster Wars,” *The New Statesman*, May 26, 2022.

Evan Osnos, “Dan Bongino and the Big Business of Returning Trump to Power,”  
*New Yorker*, December 27, 2021.

- Assignment #4 Crystal Ball due