Course Description:
In this course, students will examine the rise of the pundit class and its impact on American political discourse, media coverage, and agenda setting. You will build and demonstrate your critical thinking skills through effective writing and research about these issues.

Key questions to explore will include: do cable news and radio talk shows reflect a more divided electorate, or do they create the division? What qualifies someone as an expert to discuss policy and political issues on national television? How are pundits selected, how are their messages managed, and who decides when and where pundits espouse their opinions?

In addition to reading texts that examine this issue, we will spend much of our class time watching, listening to, reading, and analyzing political talk programming and news. We will also hear from Iowans who have played the role of pundit in local and national media. The class will also involve the opportunity to see the live recording of a statewide political talk program and a meeting with the series producer to discuss guest selection, topic selection, and scripting.

Textbook:
The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility by Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj

In addition to this text, students are expected to regularly follow the news from an established online source, a print source, and a television source. Students should be prepared to discuss news coverage in every class.

Learning Objectives: This course will foster your ability to:

1. Define different types of political opinion media and key members of the pundit class;
2. Identify sources for pertinent information related to this field and record the information for future use;
3. Differentiate trustworthy and untrustworthy media;
4. Apply strategies and tactics used to influence public opinion through the use of political opinion media to case studies and problems;
5. Research and analyze the impact of political opinion media on voters and media consumers;
6. Create a plausible entry into the political opinion media marketplace, integrating what you’ve learned to make a realistic proposal.

Learning Philosophy and Expectations:
We will work together to enhance our ability to write, think, understand, and analyze. You will be
actively involved in the class by sharing your questions and insights about media.

My role is to facilitate the learning process by offering key questions and a framework for seeking answers, helping you understand the material and its applications, and encouraging you to engage in deeper thinking. I expect you to attend each class, arriving on time, ready to contribute, and willing to assist your colleagues.

Policies:

- **Accommodations:** If a physical, mental, intellectual or emotional impairment makes necessary accommodations not already in place for this course (including the arrangement or meeting place of the class or the format of exams, for example), contact Michelle Laughlin in Student Disability Services at 271-1835. I am confident that we can work together to create a learning environment that meets your particular needs.

- **Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and cheating will not be tolerated in this class, or at this university. Academic dishonesty is an encompassing term involving any activity that seeks to gain credit for work one has not done or to deliberately damage or destroy the work of others. Plagiarism is defined as misrepresenting another’s ideas, phrases, discourse or works as one’s own. Cheating is defined as the act, or attempted act, of giving or obtaining aid and/or information by illicit means in meeting any academic requirements, including examinations.

- **Attendance:** To be successful in this class, and in your career, showing up is important. You’re expected to attend each class session. If you know you will miss class, you must make arrangements ahead of time and turn in assignments ahead of time. If you must miss for unforeseen circumstances, you must also communicate with me as soon as possible. Excessive absences are sufficient cause for reduction of your grade in this class.

- **Deadlines:** Much like in your career, assignments are due on time. You are required to submit your assignments at the beginning of class.

Grading:

- The primary grading tool in this class will be based upon four writing assignments. Writing assignments comprise 60% of your grade.
- Class participation will comprise 10% of your grade.
- In-class assignments, reflections, and exercises will comprise 30% of your grade.

Writing Workshop:
Each student is required to attend a session with a Writing Workshop tutor. These sessions should be used to work on the second paper, and failing to attend a tutoring session will lower your grade on that paper. More details about this will be provided when the second paper is assigned. To schedule an appointment, visit this link:

[http://artsci.drake.edu/writersworkshop/wwshop.html](http://artsci.drake.edu/writersworkshop/wwshop.html)

Reading Assignments:
A full schedule of reading assignments, class discussion topics, additional readings, and assignment specifics will be available on the course Blackboard page. In order to ensure fair distribution of information, I will post information on Blackboard. In addition, I will from time to time communicate with the entire class via email. You are expected to check your Drake email at least once a day.
**Course Schedule (Subject to change)**

*Please note: We have special guests, Skype sessions, and on-site activities throughout the semester, and we will need to be somewhat flexible as news/issues dictate and allow.*

**Monday, August 25** – Course overview, expectations, discussion
**Wednesday, August 27** – Political opinion media in action

**Monday, September 1** – No class – Labor Day
**Wednesday, September 3** – Read chapter 1 for class today

**Monday, September 8** – Read chapter 2 for class today
**Wednesday, September 10** – Argumentation and advocacy

**Monday, September 15** – We will meet in Cowles Library for a resource materials session
**Wednesday, September 17** – Bring a solid draft of paper 1 to class

**Monday, September 22** – Read chapter 3 for class today
**Wednesday, September 24** – Paper 1 due

**Monday, September 29** – Read chapter 4 for class today
**Wednesday, October 1** – Workshopping/prep for paper 2

**Monday, October 6** – Bring a solid draft of paper 2 to class
**Wednesday, October 8** – Read chapter 5 for class today

**Monday, October 13** – No class – Fall Break
**Wednesday, October 15** – Personalities in media

**Monday, October 20** – Paper 2 due
**Wednesday, October 22** – Read chapters 6 and 7 for class today

**Monday, October 27** – Party identification and opinion media
**Wednesday, October 29** – Workshopping paper 3

**Monday, November 3** – Bring a solid draft of paper 3 to class
**Wednesday, November 5** – Midterm election analysis and discussion

**Monday, November 10** – Paper 3 due
**Wednesday, November 12** – Political opinion media as a business

**Monday, November 17** – Bring a solid draft of paper 4 to class
**Wednesday, November 19** – Workshop paper 4

**Monday, November 24** – One-on-one final paper workshop w/Konfrst
**Wednesday, November 26** – No class – Thanksgiving Break

**Monday, December 1** – Paper 4 due. Final Presentations
**Wednesday, December 3** – Final Presentations

By December 11 at 9:30 a.m. – Final reflection due