

Politics 113: Politics and the Media

Exam Study Guide

The exam is not too far away. Here is some guidance on what to expect and how to prepare. You will find below a guide to the basics, a mock-up of the examination paper, and a few tips on writing exam essays. More advice on essay writing and preparing for exams can be found on the course pages on Canvas, where the 'Study Skills' tab will take you to the Politics & IR Stage 1 Coursebuilder site.

Basics

Examination date: 2.15-4.30pm, Saturday 24 June *but double-check this yourself – it's your responsibility.*

Location: To be notified.

Format and general: Check out the next couple of pages to see how the exam question paper will look (without the real questions but hinting at the topics, listed in the order they'll appear). There will be *two* hours' writing time and you will be expected to answer *three* questions. You will also have ten minutes to read the question paper before starting to write.

The exam paper this year gives you a free choice of ten questions to select from. Your three answers should be in the form of essays. All questions are worth equal marks, meaning that you should devote equal time and energy to each of your three answers – 40 minutes per question.

Write as much as you can in the time available, as coherently as you can. Write readably, ideally double-spaced (i.e. leaving a blank line between each line of writing). Use pen not pencil. Aim for at least 600-700 words for each answer (three pages or more, double-spaced, depending on handwriting).

Read the question carefully. Get clear on the main purpose of the question, its central theme. Make sure you answer all parts of the question. Respond actively to the question, setting out a case. Adapt what you know to what the question seeks. Demonstrate your knowledge of media and politics acquired during the course. Show us you have learned stuff.

You can answer on the topic you addressed in the test, and at least one answer allows you to build on what you learned in your media analysis assignment.

The examination is a 'closed book' exam – no written material may be taken into the room.

Exam topics and preparation

Take a look at the mock-up exam paper overleaf, so you know what to expect. The topic hints will help you find your way around the question paper and get your revision on the right track. Revise four topics (or more) so that on the day you can choose to avoid a curly question on any one of them.

Remember, the key to success is prior reading (and thinking). Review the lecture slides and your notes but *do the reading*, starting with the 'essential readings' and reading more widely (lists on Canvas). In the exam, you don't need formal referencing but make clear what you have read by identifying concepts and authors by name where possible. When using practical examples of media coverage as evidence, connect them to the question and your academic learning: be precise not vague.

Take a look at past exam papers for example questions, for writing practice or just to get a feel for the type of questions asked. You will find past papers on the library website – search for 'Exam Papers', then search in the database for 'Politics 113' and the exam papers will be the first item. Note that the format may differ between years – this year's format is in this guide.

Over the page, then, is a mock-up of the exam paper, showing the actual rubric and giving a few hints about the content. Good luck!

POLITICS 113

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

SEMESTER ONE, 2017
Campus: City

POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Politics and the Media

(Time allowed: TWO hours)

NOTE: Answer **THREE** questions. All questions carry equal marks. You are free to refer to links between topics but undue repetition between questions should be avoided.

1. This question asks about a topic from the first few weeks of the course, linking theory and media change in relation to the printing revolution. The readings for week two will be a good place to start.
2. This question will also ask about media change over time, comparing past, present and perhaps future. Readings from weeks two and three will be helpful.
3. This question invites you to write on the media (as) business and public service, which was considered directly in week four and returned to elsewhere during the course.
4. This is a question about the role of journalists in relation to political public relations, political marketing, and spin. See weeks 3b, 6a, and also 8a and 11a.
5. This question allows you to make use of what you learned in your media analysis coursework but considering it in the broader context of related lectures and readings about media analysis, particularly week seven.
6. This question invites you to consider political communication and media coverage in election campaigns, as encountered in the lectures and readings in weeks eight and nine, including considering how differing media may involve differing approaches.
7. This question asks you to consider media coverage in election campaigns, particularly regarding quality and depth. Again, readings in weeks nine and eight are the place to look.
8. This question covers the media's role in foreign affairs and in war and peace, including theories of the relationship between the news media and policy-makers. See the readings for week 10.
9. This question covers the topic of entertainment and politics, allowing focus on differing genres, from news to non-factual genres. See the readings listed in week 11.
10. This is a general question on the media's role in democracy, and its relationship to the public, making use of the CIDRA model. Readings from the first couple of weeks, and much of the course, will be helpful.

Writing an Exam Essay

The following guidance, versions of which I've supplied over the years to Politics 113 students, has now been largely superseded by advice available on the Politics and IR Stage 1 Coursebuilder website, under 'Study Skills' on Canvas, which you should consult. But here's my own advice. I hope it helps.

Writing an essay in an exam is much like writing any other essay, in terms of structure and content, though obviously there are practical differences, notably that you have less time and you do not have books to hand. Markers bear this in mind, recognising it affects how much you can produce and how polished it will be. But you will still be judged by how well you respond to each question.

First, then, consider the questions in the reading time at the start of the exam and identify questions on the topics you have revised. For each of these questions, assess what the question requires and how it fits with what you know. Don't forget that you are being tested on how you use your knowledge to respond to *this* question, not just on your knowledge of the topic. Check that you understand the meaning of the question's key terms. Check that you are ready to address all parts of the question.

For each answer, your essay should have a structure, though it can be hard to plan this carefully under exam pressures. Think of the essay as an *argument* answering the question, taking the reader smoothly and logically from an introduction to a conclusion, filling in the middle with evidence-based claims and reasons. All essays need a beginning, middle, and end. An argument in this case means a process of reasoning and not a polemical rant: you are expected to support any views and claims with reasons and evidence rather than simply assert them. *Evidence* here can mean theories and facts drawn from your reading and other course material, and actual examples of media coverage.

An essay should address and *answer the question*. The overall argument should perform this function. You should adhere closely to the question throughout. At the same time, you will often need to strike a balance between what you know and what the question asks for. Above all, *respond to the question* and make sure to *answer all parts of the question*.

The essay should draw on *relevant course material*. You are expected to demonstrate knowledge of recommended reading and the themes of lectures and tutorials, not just offer your opinions on politics and media. This knowledge may be demonstrated in the form of general ideas or specific evidence, names or quotations. You need to show evidence of engaging with the course.

You will be credited for evidence of *reading*, and for referring to relevant authors and ideas drawn from core and wider reading. It's worth having a few names and short quotations in mind, but don't 'name-drop' without relevance. You won't be penalised if a quotation isn't word perfect but try not to reverse or muddle the meaning.

The engagement with course material, and indeed any resources, should be *critical*, where 'critical' is taken to mean evaluating and analysing rather than simply disapproving or attacking.

The essay should be *well-written*. It should flow well and be a pleasure to read. It should make its points clearly. It should make one main point in each sentence. It should not sacrifice argument to detail, or vice versa. Individuals differ in writing skills but write as clearly as you can.

The essay should use *signposting* to indicate the direction being taken. This signalling should not be too laborious but should clarify the direction of argument for the reader.

The essay should be clear and *make plain* its argument and evidence, spelling out connections being made and hammering home the implications of claims or evidence. Don't assume that the markers will know what you mean, or give credit to you if you leave all the work to them.

The essay should be *well-presented*. The answer booklet should have your name and other details as requested, including question numbers. Your handwriting should be as readable as possible, and any late additions or crossings-out made neatly. You will not usually be penalised directly for poor handwriting but inevitably it makes it harder to appreciate the flow of your argument.

Perhaps above all, *keep going*. Don't stop if you realise you have diverged from some point given above. Do NOT scribble out your whole answer and start again. It's more important that you keep going and answer three questions as well as you can. Do your best – you *will* succeed.

Good luck again! *Geoff Kemp and the Politics 113 team, June 2017*