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# Electoral Politics in the Classroom: Reflections on the Sociology of Simulated Characters

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## ABSTRACT

Simulations have become a staple of political science education due to their effectiveness and creative nature that contributes to learning success. In this contribution, we argue that simulations can also offer new insights not only into student engagement and active learning, but also into the sociology of political processes. In this case it is a political communication seminar, that included a simulation of presidential campaigns and an election in a fictionalized setting. This article shows that in a classroom setting the students are prone to reproduce existing electoral leanings and behavior. In the proposed simulation of elections in a fictional country of Genovia, the students naturally aligned around two candidates: a right-wing populist and an environmental activist who ultimately lost the elections. This article offers several insights into an online simulation format and breaks down the sociology of the surprisingly realistic representation of a Euro-American electorate.

## Introduction

"My beloved Genovia! This crisis is like a postoperative shock. We cleansed ourselves of a big old nasty lump (*cough cough* Brussels…) and now we NEED healing. Factual and independent press will be a good medicine. Thank you @GenovianMirror for a trustworthy coverage." This is a fictional tweet from a fictional election campaign in a fictional country, but if you replace the name of the magazine and the name of the country, it could have easily been sent by one of the far-right politicians in Europe or in the US. Designed to accompany an introductory BA-level seminar on political communication, the simulation that produced this Tweet not only contributed to overall student success, but also stimulated student engagement, promoted socialization in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and provided insights into the current political trends.

This article shows how in a simulated setting, the students are likely to reflect and replicate political tendencies that surround them. Even though the students had complete freedom in choosing their simulation persona, most of them ended up mirroring real political phenomena around the world: populist rhetoric, green activism, conservatism, as well as immigrant communities and social media influencers. Political science students tend to be more liberal (Mariani and Hewitt 2008; Gershtenson, Rainey, and Rainey 2010), but the simulation also offered the students insights into why certain conservative and right-wing rhetoric can be effective.

There is substantial research into the teaching efficacy of simulations as they engage students' higher order cognitive skills by encouraging them to apply their theoretical knowledge in an original way (Asal and Blake 2006; Shellman and Turan 2006; Jones and Bursens 2015). One way of doing it is by giving the students smaller regular assignments where they are supposed to apply theoretical concepts to the fictional setting. This technique led to a marked improvement in the learning success in the seminar group: out of 4 taught cohorts, none of the students failed the class and the average grade for the seminar was "very good." According to Danley-Scott (2019) student success can be categorized as grades above D, which the students in this seminar achieved continuously. As the students are mimicking a real behavior even in a simulated setting (Jones 2013), a simulation becomes a place for them to test their newly attained knowledge via weekly contributions without the pressure of a final grade. Moreover, the observation of "real behavior" offers certain insights into the contemporary social trends in the electorate.

Designing a successful simulation involves the challenge of aligning the learning objectives with the creative output. To address this issue, the preparation and interaction phases of the simulation were merged. This approach enabled students to apply theoretical concepts on a weekly basis and develop their simulation character. As a result, they could not only evaluate their knowledge on a regular basis through a short assignment but also develop a strategic campaign for a longer time period, which is typically not possible in a one- or two-day simulation. Furthermore, the students trained their critical thinking and media literacy skills as both media and voters were able to interact with social media posts made in the early stages of the simulation. To address privacy concerns, students were not obligated to establish new or utilize their own social media accounts, but could instead imitate social media posts, comments, "likes" and other reactions on the discussion board.

This article will proceed as follows: firstly, we will discuss the set-up and the learning objectives behind the simulation. Next, we will describe the fictionalized setting and the simulation result. Thirdly, we will discuss in more detail the sociology of the electorate and its connection to the "populist Zeitgeist" (Mudde 2004). We will conclude with some reflections on the value of simulations for stimulating student engagement, as well as current political trends around the world.

## Seminar Format

Political Communication was designed as an exploratory seminar for a small number of students. The seminar was consisted of 10 theory-centered meetings dedicated to the

following topics: Public opinion and Mass Media, Media and democracy, Mediatization, Framing, Security, Persuasion, Branding, Social Media, Objectivity, Infotainment (See Appendix 1 Syllabus). The main focus of these topics can be categorized into three character groups: public, candidates, and media. During the seminar, students participated in a presidential election simulation where they had to select a role and follow their character until the end of the course. Throughout the seminar, students were evaluated through weekly formative assessments, including digital media input, and a final summative written assessment, which was a memorandum.

Building on the work by Petranek et al, Asal and Blake (Petranek, Corey et al. 1992; Asal and Blake 2006), the seminar had three phases: preparation, interaction and debriefing. To foster student engagement, the preparation and interaction phases were frequently combined. This required students to embody their personas every week after the theoretical input, which was delivered through vlogs or presentations in the offline setting, and seminar discussions. By doing so, the seminar enabled students to expand their political communication expertise and advance their simulation characters throughout the course. In essence, the seminar's theoretical and conceptual input was distributed throughout its duration to facilitate learning and character development.

In preparing the simulation, the instructor opted for a fictitious Republic of Genovia inspired by the setting from Disney's movies "Princess Diaries" 1&2 featuring Anne Hathaway and Julie Andrews. We added on to the fictional environment and together with the students decided to make Genovia pandemic-free which offered an important tool to combat anxiety and social isolation among students (Parlapani, Holeva et al. 2020; Zhu 2020).

Genovia was supposed to create several parallels with existing political developments: Brexit, Euro-skepticism, far-right movements. The students were asked to either assume a role of a presidential candidate, a media outlet or a voter with a carefully thought-out profile. There were certain, sometimes self-imposed limits on the character discourse: especially far-right leaning characters still refrained from using hate speech rhetoric. This way, in line with humanizing pedagogy principles we ensured that the learning environment was not hampered by discursive violence (Cornwell 1998; Waltman 2018). The following characters participated in the simulation[1]:

- Presidential Candidate Alonzo Fétel, Genovia's "Pear King"
- Presidential Candidate and environmental activist Olivia Harrison
- Julie Meier, a "simple voter" and religious activist
- Vanessa LeBlanc, beauty blogger, "not interested in politics"
- Maryam Rahimi, a questioning voter with Persian roots
- Johannes, a "normal" voter
- Ferdinand von Urathorpe, a rich, castle-owning financier
- Meghan Hathaway, a royal activist and editor of M. Magazine
- Marie-Claire Schubért, a journalist with the Genovia Times
- Prudence Pearson, editor-in-chief of the Genovian Herald

Each of the characters, including the instructor's simulation alter ego, maintained their own thread on the Discussion Board, where they posted weekly updates, ranging

from screenshots of Tweets or Instagram posts to small videos and magazine issues. During the seminar, the students spontaneously gravitated towards major media outlets and established a social network, in which they conducted interviews, published articles, and referred to the media coverage in their discussion board posts. The incorporation of humor into the education setting (Banas, Dunbar et al. 2011, Appleby 2018) not only boosted self-motivation and enhanced students' interest in the subject matter, but also played a crucial role in reducing anxiety and stress levels, particularly given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several of the theoretical sessions contained break-out group activities, where the students (not in character) were supposed to offer expert advice to each candidate: e.g., update their branding strategy or offer advice on framing their message. The active phase of the simulation consisted of two sessions: debate between the presidential candidates based on the questions from voters and the elections proper. During the debates, the voters were supposed to ask their questions in character before the elections, while the media outlets "performed" their coverage live. The simulation ended with the vote—in an offline version it would have been with ballots and pears handed out to each voter—but in the online environment voter fraud was preempted by a polling function, even though the secrecy of the vote was not preserved. The announcement of the results of the elections was a segue to the debriefing phase of the simulation as well as feedback.

Not entirely surprisingly, the right-wing populist candidate, Alonzo Fétel won with only one vote difference and during the debriefing session the students out of character could explain their vote based on their voter's preferences and offering a theory-based explanation on their characters' preferences. It is the debriefing stage of the simulation that prompted the instructor to address the sociology of the fictional electorate that elected yet another far-right populist.

## Sociology of the electorate

The winning candidate, Alonzo Fétel, was one of the more carefully crafted characters in the simulation. His initial description offered an in-depth profile reminiscent of existing celebrity and carnivalesque politicians that have become popular around the world (Janack 2005; Janack 2006; Wideman 2011; Gaufman 2018). Fétel's colorful description included yacht parties, vomiting in Jennifer Lopez's purse and other exploits that were supposed to cement the candidate's "non-political" background. The "Pear King" definitely had several parallels with Donald Trump, but had also a distinctive European flair and a very pronounced xenophobic and economic nationalist streak that was somewhat toned down in the course of the simulation in order to make him more "presidential."

The other presidential candidate, Olivia Harrison, by the student's own admission during the debriefing session, strived to create a polar opposite candidate to Fétel and embraced the issue of green activism and climate change—similar to Greta Thunberg. Harrison's candidacy reflected other political tendencies as well: she was vocal about her feminist position as well as the importance of her presidency in the #MeToo era and frequently used the hashtag #ThePowerofWomensWords. Olivia Harrison also offered many personal story communications that seemed to have resonated with voters, such

as her struggle with a heart disease. At the same time, her green activism was also supplemented by her outspoken Christian beliefs—a combination not that common in politics (Kearns 2012; Nicinska 2013), as some researchers compared climate change to a belief system by itself (Bhagwat, Economou et al. 2016).

Meghan Hathaway, a royal activist and editor-in-chief of the glossy M. Magazine, "married the love of [her] life: Harry, an actor and activist from the United States." Meghan's character represented a gender-flipped version of the 2020 infamous "Megxit" when Prince Harry and his wife and actress Meghan Markle announced that they would stand back from their royal duties. Meghan Hathaway and her magazine openly supported Olivia Harrison's candidacy even though to maintain the objectivity of the journal (Parks 2019), she also published interviews with Alonzo Fétel and his supporters. Her editorials were also unapologetically feminist criticizing "our fair share of rich, middle-aged white guys who promise change." M. Magazine equally embraced "metaphors of care" and empathetic language in its embrace of Harrison's candidacy.

Genovian Times and its editor-in-chief Marie-Claire Schubért represented a more classic and mainstream media outlet that accurately predicted Fétel's win in the elections. Genovian Times also branched out to social media apart from their video format and relayed their financial struggles by offering to subscribe to their newspaper in order to "#SaveRealJournalism." Genovian Times appeal to "save real journalism" also reflected the media crisis tendencies around the world that were touched upon during the seminar, such as defunded newsrooms and commercialization. At the same time, Marie-Claire's coverage did not suffer from the "bothsides-ism" when it came to the elections, Genovian Times was laser focused on the issues and not more scandalous tidbits around the candidates.

An emerging trend of female far-right influencers, such as Lana Lokteff, Ayla Stewart, Faith Goldy or Lauren Southern, was represented by beauty blogger Vanessa LeBlanc. According to the student who created this persona, she modeled it indeed on far-right YouTube influencers and tried to emulate Natalie Wynn's engagement with far-right rhetoric (Clifton 2019) when she discusses far-right female YouTubers like Blaire White whom she calls Vanessa LeBlanc. Female support of far-right movements or white supremacy as a cause has received somewhat less academic attention (Leidig 2021) despite the fact that white nationalism as an ideology was common among American women during World War II (Jeansonne 1996) or the fact that women played an important role in the preservation of the Confederate legacy (Cox 2003; Kelly 2018). So the fact that Vanessa made an appearance in the electorate was also evidence that female far-right influencers are becoming more visible. Vanessa's trajectory during the Genovian elections followed somewhat the trajectory of Bre Faucheux, an aspiring novelist who at some point completely embraced white supremacist ideas and re-oriented her YouTube channel (Darby 2017). From beauty blogger, she became quite involved in the electoral campaign on Fétel's side and ultimately voted for him.

Another demographic that was represented in the Genovian electorate was second generation immigrants. In this case, it was Maryam Rahimi, a daughter of Iranian communist refugees, born and raised in Genovia. Maryam was the only visible representation of diversity in the white, Christian and Eurocentric Genovian elections. At the same time, Ms. Rahimi embodied a "model" citizen with a migration background: not

only was her family assimilated in the Genovian society, Maryam herself did a degree in education, played bass in a metal band, and became more interested in politics since the looming Gexit. Maryam's political and assimilation choices were reminiscent of the ones faced by second generation immigrants (Portes and Zhou 1993; Giguère, Lalonde et al. 2010): she would vote for the Genovian Communist Party out of habit, but not necessarily out of conviction (Bergh and Bjørklund 2011).

While Maryam's character was a very believable and realistic creation, it also exposed the issue of the "model immigrant" (Yukich 2013): she was even paraded as an example of successful integration by the far-right candidate. In other words, by challenging the far-right stereotypes of supposedly lazy and welfare abusing migrants, this fictional portrayal of a model immigrant creates a certain burden of expectations on integration that are not necessarily a function of immigrants or their descendants. To put it in another way, one of the first Hollywood portrayals of an inter-racial couple on screen "Guess who's coming to dinner" with Sidney Poitier showcased that in order for a black man to be accepted by a white family of his fiancée, he needs to be a model citizen, a successful doctor, and come from a wealthy background (Kurlansky 2005).

Ferdinand von Urathorpe, an elitist and rich financier was mostly concerned about his taxes and chateaux—a fitting representation of the top 1%, concerned with redistribution of their (inherited) wealth (Block 2009; Graetz and Shapiro 2011; Powdthavee and Oswald 2014; Emmenegger and Marx 2019). Frustrated with Gexit, Ferdinand published an op-ed with the M. Magazine and fired off snarky memes to mock the political direction the country was going into. Even though his comments seemed to align more closely with Ms. Harrison's agenda, the seemingly liberal Ferdinand ultimately voted for Fétel in some ways confirming the "silent Trump voter" hypothesis (Spectator 2017).

Julie Meier was an example of a conservative and religious voting group, from an "affluent Genovian family of real estate moguls with Swiss roots" and "an associate of her family's business and a high-ranking member of Genovia's largest religious organization, God's Church." Given that her character was opposed to social media and technology in the beginning, Julie refused to cooperate with Genovian outlets, often decrying the "godforsaken website" (Twitter) and Fetel's "filthy lifestyle" and encouraging to vote for Ms. Harrison as a proper Christian. Julie's announced voting preferences stood in sharp contrast with a similar demographic in the US where white evangelical voters have overwhelmingly embraced Donald Trump (Gorski 2019; Martí 2019; Margolis 2020; Martí, Yukich et al. 2020). In this regard, Julie's character was closer to the European religious conservative electorate that still mostly values personal qualities of their elected officials (Baumann, Debus et al. 2015; Engler and Dümig 2017).

Johannes, "the normal voter" was an example of student engagement that showed that participation in the simulation did not have to involve complete immersion into the fictionalized setting. Johannes reflected on the simulation experience from the standpoint of the theoretical texts that were offered for each session. In other words, Johannes provided an analysis of the Genovian election campaign through the prism applying the concept in class—exactly what the learning outcome of the simulation was supposed to encourage the students to do. The interesting part was also, what a "normal voter" meant in this context: judging from Johannes's Tweets, he was a center or center-right leaning voter with pro-EU views, liberal outlook on migration and economy.

In that regard, he is indeed representative of a majority reminiscent of the European People's Party in the European Parliament.

## Conclusion

As many authors have noted, most recently Kammerer and Higashi (Kammerer Jr and Higashi 2021) there is a proven effectiveness of simulations in the (political science) classroom. However, apart from the pedagogical advantages this technique offers, a meta-reflection on the sociology of the roles the students enact is also valuable. In other words, the de-briefing stage of the simulation warrants deeper sociological analysis as the students are not only learning and applying the knowledge, they are also integrating real-word experience of the political Zeitgeist.

After four cohorts, it has become obvious that every run reflected certain political and sociological tendencies with students processing the political communication events in real life and reflecting on them in a scholarly setting. The simulation also allows the students to "try on" a different political ideology than the one they are socialized into and provides them insights the discursive and ideological dynamics they are not necessarily exposed to. While the main target of a simulation is learning success, we should also not lose sight of the additional benefits it brings. In the case presented here, but also repeated in the other cohorts, the students managed to pick up on current political tendencies around the world offering valuable insights into the way the next generation makes sense of the political world around them.

## Note

1. The students who participated in the simulation are co-authors of this article and are credited as such in this submission. They are also anonymized as characters in the simulation.

## Notes on contributors

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## Appendix 1

1.  Type of course unit, number of ECTS credit points and admission requirements

    a.  **Type:** Elective for students within the European Politics and Society
    b.  **ETCS credit points:** 5 ECTS
    c.  **Admission requirements:** Admission to the second year, in other words at least 45 ECTS from the propaedeutic phase of the major.

2.  Content of the course unit
    The research seminar focuses on a particular subject, problem, or area of study within the field of European politics and society. Through the lens of a specialized subject, students will further familiarize with the conceptual frameworks, theories, and methods employed in the study of European political, societal, and historical problems. Seminar topics are subject to change.

    This class is aimed at combining theory and practice of political communication, examining the triangle between politics, the media and the public. In this class, we will explore how media effect on politics is theorized, what kind of rhetoric strategies are the most effective and what kind of genres have become the most influential in the age of social media. Hence, apart from exploring theories of political communication and media effects, the students are expected to participate in the presidential election simulation, by assuming the roles of presidential candidates, their staff, media personalities or the public.

3.  Position of the course unit in the degree program

4. Learning outcomes of the course unit
   Upon successful completion of the course unit, students are able to:

   1. Develop analytic, research, methodological, and independent academic writing skills through the lens of a particular area of scholarly study in the field of European politics and society. (2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.2, 5.3)
   2. Apply and reflect upon the conceptual frameworks, theories, and methods employed in the study of European political, societal, and historical problems. (1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2)
   3. Apply and use their skills in the context of cutting-edge research on a particular problem or theme. (1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2)

5. Mode of instruction and learning activities
   In the seminar (2 sessions each week) students will discuss relevant empirical, theoretical and methodological scholarly texts in a variety of ways, i.e. small groups discussions, readings questions and group presentations. The seminar is divided into two parts: the first one is a theoretical engagement with literature on political communication and the second one is the practical application of the knowledge in an election campaign in a fictional country. Given the practical nature of the seminar, the students will be expected to participate in a 2-part simulation of presidential elections. In the course of the seminar, students will work on their digital media strategy and their simulation memo in and outside of class. By the end of the block students will get ample of time to process the feedback given by the lecturer and their peers on their presentations and finalize their memos.

6. Assessment
   a. Mode of assessment

      1. Written memorandum
      2. Presentation
      3. Simulation participation
      4. Digital media participation

   b. Assessment: duration, time and place; deadlines and procedures

| Assignment | Deadline(s) | Submission | Grades and feedback |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Memorandum[a] | Depending on your role, either May 28th or June 4th 2020 before 10.00 am | Nestor (Memo folder) | Grading within 14 days. Written feedback via grade sheet. |
| 2. Presentation | Week-specific | Nestor (Presentation folder) | Written feedback via grade sheet. |
| 3. Digital media | Weekly submission | Nestor (digital media folder) | Written feedback via grade sheet. |
| 4. Simulation participation | May 28th and June 4th 2020 | In class | Oral feedback during the final session and written feedback via grade sheet. |

[a]Resits will be provided for the memorandum. The deadline for the resit of the memo is Sunday 21 June before midnight.

   c. Assessment criteria

   **Memorandum (memo)**

   A Memo is a 1000-word document (not including references) that that should be handed in by **May 28th**. If you are a **potential voter**, you are supposed to describe the political communication strategies by which they should be affected. If you are a **member of the media**, you are supposed to concentrate on different ways you can reach the electorate and you are supposed to present your memo your memo on **June 4th**. If you are a **presidential candidate** in the simulation your memo is also due **June 4th** and you are supposed to analyze your potential electorate based on the press conference session.

General guidelines for all participants:

- about 1000 words in length (not including references)
- at least **8 academic** sources
- engagement with the seminar topics
- clear structure
- concrete suggestions

Additional guidelines for **members of the public**:
- brief voter profile (e.g., age, race, gender identity, occupation, etc)
- persuasion/framing/coverage tactics that would work on you based on your voter profile

Additional guidelines for **members of the media**:
- brief description of your media outlet
- reflection on mediatization, objectivity, infotainment
- persuasion/framing/coverage tactics for your specific outlet

Additional guidelines for **presidential candidates**
- (social) media strategy based on press conference, i.e. including the input from voters on May 28th
- persuasion/framing/branding strategies

Remember that the public is supposed to hand in their memos on **May 28th** and "act" on their memos during the press conference, asking questions of the candidates based on their respective profiles. Members of the media and presidential candidates are supposed to hand in their memos on **June 4th**. Members of the Media are supposed to read out a sample coverage of the candidate(s) before the elections on **June 4th**. Presidential candidates and members of the media are welcome to record videos as a visual aid for the simulation.

**Presentation** is graded according to the following criteria:

- Presentation of core arguments or facts
- Use of academic sources
- Use of examples and illustrations
- Clarity and structure of presentation
- Summary and connection to relevant academic debates

## Digital Media
Depending on your role, you are supposed to create a page/channel on a social network, either publicly accessible or via private link/invitation (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) for the rest of the class and the instructor to see. If you are not willing to register an account, you can imitate a social media page with a word or PDF-document. This fictitious account is supposed to have weekly updates which are supposed to be posted any day of the week either as a link or as a screenshot or as a word/PDF file.

## Simulation
The students are expected to participate in the Presidential Elections Simulation. The simulation is a two-day exercise, on May 28th and June 4th where students participate in the mock presidential elections. You are supposed to be either a voter, a member of the media, or a presidential candidate.

On **May 28th**, the presidential candidates announce their candidacies during a press conference where members of the media and general public can pose questions.

After the press conference, some members of the public present their memos on political communication strategies that are supposed to affect specific groups of the electorate.

On **June 4th**, presidential candidates engage in a debate and members of the media present their memos/videos. After that, the public cast their votes and the winner is announced.

   d.   Calculating preliminary and final marks

      1.   Memo 50%
      2.   Presentation 30%
      3.   Digital Media 10%
      4.   Simulation 10%

   e.   Conditions of taking exams

      1.   80% attendance in seminar meetings (no more than 2 seminars may be missed. Absence is only accepted if it is communicated to the lecturer prior to class and supported by a valid reason)
      2.   A pass (5.5 or higher) for the memo. The average grade for all assignments needs to be 5.5 to pass the course.

   f.   Example of tests

      All assignments will be explained in class.

7.   Cheating and plagiarism
   Cheating and plagiarism are subject to the provisions set down in the TER (Article 8.17 of Part A of the BA TER or Article 4.13 of Part A of the MA TER).

   The Board of Examiners is always informed in cases of suspected cheating or plagiarism.

8.   Calculation of student workload
   5 ECTS = 140 hours

   Seminar meetings: 24 hours
   Memo research and writing: 40 hours (250–280 pages)
   Presentation preparation: 26 hours
   Reading of mandatory literature: 40 hours (250–280 pages)
   Digital media input: 5 hours
   Simulation preparation: 5 hours

9.   Literature

   **Session 1 (16.04.2020)**
   **Introduction. Public opinion and Mass Media**
   Moy, P., & Bosch, B. (2013). Theories of public opinion. In *Handbook of Communication Science*. Vol. 1: Theories and Models of Communication, edited by Paul Cobley and Peter J. Schultz, 289–308. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2013.
   *Further reading*: Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet. 1944. *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes up his Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

**Session 2 (20.04.2020)**
**Media and democracy**
Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The virtual sphere: The internet as a public sphere. New media & society, 4(1), 9–27.
*Further reading*: Calhoun, Craig. 1992. "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere." In Calhoun (ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
**Session 3 (23.04.2020)**
**Mediatization**
Strömbäck, J. (2008). Four Phases of Mediatization: An Analysis of the Mediatization of Politics. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13(3), 228–246. doi:10.1177/1940 161208319097
*Further reading*: Bennett, W. L., & Iyengar, S. (2008). A New Era of Minimal Effects? The Changing Foundations of Political Communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58, 707–731.
**Session 4 (30.04.2020)**
**Framing**
Cacciatore, M. A., Scheufele, D. A., & Iyengar, S. (2016). The end of framing as we know it … and the future of media effects. Mass Communication and Society, 19(1), 7–23.
*Further reading*: Entman, Robert M. 1993. "Framing." *Journal of Communication* 43 (Fall): 51–58. 5
**Session 5 (4.05.2020)**
**Security**
Brown, J. A. (2016). Running on fear: Immigration, race and crime framings in contemporary GOP presidential debate discourse. Critical Criminology, 24(3), 315–331.
*Further reading*: Gadarian, Shana Kushner. 2010. "The Politics of Threat: How Terrorism News Shapes Foreign Policy Attitudes." *The Journal of Politics* 72 (2): 469–483.
**Session 6 (7.05.2019)**
**Persuasion**
Landau, M. J., & Keefer, L. A. (2015). The persuasive power of political metaphors. *Social psychology and politics*, 1–25.
*Further reading*: Valdivia, P. (2019). Narrating crises and populism in Southern Europe: Regimes of metaphor. *Journal of European Studies*, 49(3–4), 282–301.
**Session 7 (11.05.2020)**
**Social Media**
Sobieraj, S., & Berry, J. M. (2011). From incivility to outrage: Political discourse in blogs, talk radio, and cable news. *Political Communication*, 28(1), 19–41.
*Further reading*: Papacharissi, Z. (2015). *Affective publics: Sentiment, technology, and politics*. Oxford University Press, Chapter 2.
**Session 8 (14.05.2020)**
**Objectivity**
Parks, P. (2019). Covering Trump's 'Carnival': A Rhetorical Alternative to 'Objective' Reporting. *Journalism Practice*, 1–21.
*Further reading*: Ansolabehere, S., & Iyengar, S. (1996). The craft of political advertising: A progress report. Political persuasion and attitude change in Mutz, D. C., Sniderman, P. M., & Brody, R. A. (Eds.). *Political persuasion and attitude change*. University of Michigan Press, pp. 101–122.
**Session 9 (18.05.2019)**
**Branding**
Marsh, D., & Fawcett, P. (2011). Branding, politics and democracy. *Policy Studies*, 32(5), 515–530.
*Further reading*: Van Ham, P. (2002). Branding territory: Inside the wonderful worlds of PR and IR theory. *Millennium*, 31(2), 249–269.

**Session 10 (25.05.2020)**
**Infotainment**
Young, D. G. (2019). *Irony and outrage: The polarized landscape of rage, fear, and laughter in the United States*. Oxford University Press, USA. (Chapter 9)
*Further reading:* Baum, Matthew A. 2002. "Sex, Lies, and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public." *American Political Science Review* 96(1).
Hart, R. P. (2013). The Rhetoric of political comedy: a tragedy? *International Journal of Communication* (19328036), 7.
**Session 11 (28.05.2020) Press Conference. Public Memos Due**
**Session 12 (04.06.2020) Debate and Elections. Presidential and Press Memos Due.**

## Appendix 2

Academic year   2019–2020
Semester:

| | Name student | Final grade | 0.0 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Weight | Grade | Grading Scale |
| Memo (50%) | Form (min. 8 sources/1000 words) | 30% | | 9   Excellent |
| | Engagement with Seminar Topics | 20% | | 8   Very Good |
| | Clear Structure | 20% | | 7   Good |
| | Concrete Suggestions | 30% | | 6   Satisfactory |
| | Subtotal Memo | | 0 | 5   Almost Satisfactory |
| Presentation (30%) | Presentation of core arguemnts and facts | 30% | | 4   Unsatisfactory |
| | Use of academic sources | 20% | | 3   Very unsatisfactory |
| | Use of examples and illustration | 10% | | 2   Insufficient |
| | Clarity and structure of presentation | 20% | | 1   Fully insufficient |
| | Summary and connection to relevant academic debates | 20% | | |
| | Subtotal Presentation | | 0 | |
| Digital Media (10%) | Subtotal Digital Media | | | |
| Simulation (10%) | Subtotal Simulation | | | |