Take Home Essay. This exam is designed to allow you to demonstrate your deep and detailed mastery of the readings and class discussions, and your ability to apply concepts to the events in the current political and media environment. Your essays must be typewritten, double-spaced, and no more than six pages (of text; graphics do not count toward the page total). To score well, your essays should probably not be less than six pages either. Use direct quotes from the books (including page references) where appropriate. Be as detailed as possible in your analysis, but also strive to be concise.

ESSAYS ARE DUE IN MY OFFICE (GC 210) BY 10:00 A.M., TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2004

Based on the arguments of Graber, Edelman, and Richardson (and your own analysis) develop an example of a news story (print or broadcast) based on recent events that demonstrates how political news coverage can be improved. Your essays should (1) briefly summarize key elements of the relevant critiques of media coverage of politics developed in our course materials, using specific quotes from the readings to support and illustrate your points. If your focus is very narrow, you might also briefly consider a wider range of views that would allow you to demonstrate your mastery of the assigned readings; (2) Create a news story based on actual facts that demonstrates how media coverage of politics can be improved. If you have the skills and equipment to do so, you can present your prototype “improved” news story in an appropriate multimedia format (audio only, A/V, HTML, etc.). Otherwise, you should use storyboards, graphics, scripts, or other means to demonstrate how the story would actually “look” or sound. Your essays should address questions such as the following:

- What kind of news stories do citizens pay closest attention to?
- What kinds of stories do reporters find most newsworthy?
- What are some of the differences between local news and network news?
- What are some problems in the way reporters frame news stories?
- Are there differences between the ways journalists and audiences frame news stories?
- What are the five “w’s” that structure news stories? Which one are viewers most interested in? Which ones do most news stories focus on?
- What are some of the elements of news content that attract viewers’ attention? How do television, newspapers and magazines compare in terms of such elements?
- What are some examples of how the formatting of news is hostile toward viewer comprehension?
- What are some characteristics of effective transmission of information in news?
- What is the history and origin of “ad watch” journalism?
• What are some of the problems with ad watch journalism?
• How can ad watch journalism be improved?
  • What factors are necessary to make television more effective in serving the public’s need for civic information?
• What are some of the characteristics of the way “Generation Xers” approach news?
• How might niche programming threaten democracy? What is the evidence so far?
• What are the seven elements of excellence in news identified by researchers at the Project for Excellence in Journalism?
• What are some of the ways journalists can be more effective in their storytelling?
• What are some of the trends in news coverage? How has the overall quality of available news been affected?
• How do the economics of the news business affect the prospects for high-quality programming?
• What political reforms might lead to better information for the public?
• On balance, how do you assess the state of political information, citizens’ political knowledge and democratic engagement in the U.S.?
• How do you compare Graber’s view of politics with Edelman’s?
• What is the role of campaigns in American democracy?