INTL 4665: Global Politics and Digital Media

Dr. Rongbin Han
(MWF, 11:30 - 12:20; Caldwell Hall 107)
Office Hours: Monday 13:30-14:30 or by Appointment

Course Description and Objectives
This course introduces students to the complicated relationship between digital media and politics in contemporary world. Through the semester, we will examine, with particular focus on the United States and China, how democratic and non-democratic regimes shape the institutions and functions of digital media and how digital media, in a variety of forms, influence domestic politics and foreign relations. We will also discuss a series of important implications of the expansion of new media in democratic, authoritarian and transitioning regimes.

Course Materials (Available in UGA Library or ELC)

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

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Attendance & Participation (25%)  
The course is **discussion based**. Please read and reflect upon assigned readings before coming to class. You are also encouraged to participate electronically through our course ELC platform through online discussion. Please note **you should definitely not attend the meetings and go to the doctor if you have any symptoms**.

Response Paper (10 %)  
Please write one mini response paper (two-page, single spaced) on the date you select. The response paper shall (1) effectively summarizing assigned readings and (2) critically engage and reflect on one or more points you derive from the readings; (3) include one or two discussion questions. **Please submit the response paper two days before the date you pick** (for example: if you select August 25, you shall submit the response paper by August 23 midnight). Response paper writers are expected to facilitate discussion.

Midterm Case Report (25%)  
Pick one digital media event/phenomenon that strikes you most (cyber terrorism, Russian trolls in the presidential election, #MeToo, any hacking incidents, etc) and write a case-study report (double spaced, about 8 pages). Explain the event/phenomenon (**what, who, when, how and why**) and highlight in what ways digital media has made a difference and how involved actors (state, companies, social organizations, individuals, etc) use the Internet to different degrees? In particular, explain how you see how digital media has (or has not) changed the socio-political life today. Talk to the instructor if you have questions regarding selection of the topic.

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1 The syllabus is a general plan for the course and updates may be necessary. See the instructor if you need special classroom accommodations.
Digital Media Experiment or Final Reflection Essay (35%)

You may opt to conduct a digital media experiment to learn about the impact of digital media on our social life or factors that shape the effects of the digital media. Based on your experience, write a 2000-word summary report, explaining (1) The experiment goal and design (what you want to test; how you implement it); (2) findings & reflections. Please bear in mind ethical concerns when doing the experiment. Consult the instructor about your plan.

You may write a final reflection essay addressing the following question: What can the United States (including the government, platforms, individuals, etc.) do about online misinformation and disinformation (and the implications)?

Movie Review (5%)

We will have movie days. Please select one movie and write a review (about 600-1000 words), covering the stories (plot) and analyzing how it is relevant to themes covered in the class. You may also pick a movie to review on your own. Check with the instructor in this case.

Important Deadlines

October 11 Midterm Case Report Due
December 7 Summary of Digital Media Experiment or Final Reflection due
December 15 Movie Review due

Grade Dispute:

For questions about your exam grade, report to the instructor within one week from the time you receive the grade, with a written appeal explaining why you think your grade should be changed. Please bear in mind that disputing grade may end up with higher, lower or no change in your grade.

Academic Honesty:

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University’s academic honesty policy, “A Culture of Honesty,” and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in “A Culture of Honesty” found at: www.uga.edu/honesty. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Plagiarism will NOT be tolerated. Approach the instructor if you are unclear about what is plagiarism.

Resources

UGA has a vast array of resources to support students facing challenges. Please don't hesitate to come speak with me or contact these resources directly. Note that UGA faculty and staff are obligated to report any knowledge of sexual assault/relationship violence to UGA's Equal Opportunity Office.

UGA's Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention can speak to students confidentially.

- **Office of Student Care & Outreach** (coordinate assistance for students experiencing hardship/unforeseen circumstances) – 706-542-7774 or by email sco@uga.edu
- **Counseling and Psychiatric Services** (CAPS) - 706-542-2273 (during regular business hours) After Hour Mental Health Crisis: 706-542-2200 (UGA Police—ask to speak to the CAPS on-call clinician)
- **Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention** – 706-542-SAFE (The advocates at RSVP can provide student confidentiality).
CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1
August 18 Welcome! Course Introduction
August 20 Comparative Framework

Week 2
August 23 Media, Democracy and News Production in the U.S.
  # USAID Center for Democracy and Governance, Role of Media in Democracy, June 1999.
August 25 China: An example of Authoritarian Media System

August 27 Discussion: Media, Media Systems, and Regime Types

Week 3
August 30 History of Social Media and Politics in the Digital Era—Overview
  * Williams and Carpini, After Broadcast News, Chapter 5.
September 1 History of Social Media and Politics in the Digital Era—Overview

September 3 Discussion—How Internet situates in and affects existing power relations?

Week 4
September 6 Labor Day-No Class
September 8 Governability of the Internet?
  # Lawrence Lessig, Code 2.0 (Basic Books, 2006), Chapters 1-2.

September 10 Discussion: Do you think the Internet can be regulated or not?
Week 5 Governing the Internet

September 13 Governing the Internet—Global Governance
* Recommended: EU & General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), https://gdpr-info.eu/

September 15 Governing the Internet—Cyber-Sovereignty

September 17 Discussion: Is internet governance moving closer to a truly global governance framework or cyber-sovereignty? What is the position of the U.S.?

Week 6

September 20 Platforms and Big Internet Corporations
# Rebecca MacKinnon, Consent of the Networked (Basics Books), Ch. 8, 9 and 10.

September 22 Governing the Internet—Continued

September 24 Discussion: The governance in internet governance and the most decisive actor(s)/mechanism(s) in governing the Internet?

Week 7

September 27 Network Neutrality

September 29 Digital Divide
* Anjana Susarla, “The new digital divide is between people who opt out of algorithms and people who don’t,” The Conversation, April 17, 2019.

**October 1** Watch video and participate in discussion (Instructor out of town for APSA)
Youngmoo Kim, “*Getting Woke to the Digital Divide,*” TEDxPhiladelphia.

**Week 8**

**October 4 Digital Media and Privacy**


**October 6 Deep Web, Hacking, and Hacker Practice**


**October 8 Movie: Deep Web (2015)**

Virtual discussion: Your experiences and reflections on personal data security?

**Week 9**

**October 11 Digital Media and News Industry**

* Paul Starr, “Goodbye to the Age of Newspapers (Hello to a New Era of Corruption),” *New Republic* (March 4, 2009).

* Economist, “Social Media: The people formerly known as the audience,” (July 7th, 2011).


**October 13 A Free Irresponsible Press? Wiki Leaks, NSA, and Snowden**


**October 15 Movie: Snowden (2016)**

**Week 10**

**October 18 E-Government**


**October 20 Digital Media and Social Activism**

October 22 Discussion: How digital media may have empowered citizens both in terms of improving governance and popular mobilization?

Week 11 Digital Media and Democracy

October 25

October 27
* Alex Hern, “Cambridge Analytica: How Did It Turn Clicks into Votes,” Guardian (May 6, 2018).

October 29 Fall Break, No Class

Week 12 Misinformation, Disinformation, and Democracy

November 1

November 3

November 5 Discussion: What is the gravest threat to democracy in the digital age?

Week 13

November 8 Digital Media and Authoritarian Politics: Cyber Activism

November 10 Digital Media and Authoritarian Politics: State Responses

November 12 Discussion: How digital media affects and is shaped by authoritarianism?

Week 14 Cyber Warfare and Cyber Terrorism
November 15 Cyber Warfare

November 18 Cyber Terrorism

November 20 Discussion: Implications of cyber warfare/terrorism on international relations & domestic politics?

Week 15
November 22 Movie: The Social Dilemma (2020)

Week 16 The Future
November 29 Technological Evolution and Future Implications
* Samantha Cole, “*There is No Tech Solution to Deepfakes*,” Motherboard (August 14, 2018).

December 1 Technology, State, and the Business

December 3 Discussion: Future of digital politics and humanity?

Week 17
December 6: Share findings of the Digital Media Experiment
December 7: Q&A (Online); Digital Media Experiment Report/Final Reflection Due

December 15: Movie Review Due