INTL 8405 Comparative Politics & Digital Media

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Location: Candler Hall 117
Class Time: Thursdays, 3:55-6:45 pm

Course Description
This seminar critically examines the central role of digital media in today’s world by engaging a selection of key themes at the conjunction of comparative politics and digital media. The course will first familiarize you with digital media and its development across the globe by examining the history, key concepts and theories, and methodological approaches related to the rise of digital media. We will examine the debates about the political implications of digital media, particularly its impact on state-society relations in both democratic and authoritarian regimes. For instance, we will cover themes like digital media and electoral politics, digital media and social activism, digital media and revolutions, digital media and e-government & governance, as well as cyber security and cyber warfare. You will also have an opportunity to include any theme that you are particularly interested in by writing and presenting a research paper on a topic of your selection. I expect to have one-on-one meetings with you to help with your project.

Course Materials:
The course assigns several books, which you need to purchase, rent or borrow from the library. Please note that many of the books are available online or in e-version from UGA library. You are also recommended to read on traditional media systems and politics. Approach the instructor for suggestions.

** If you have a disability and require reasonable classroom accommodations, please see me after class. **

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

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Participation (20%) Please attend classes regularly. Please read and reflect upon assigned readings as well as the reading responses from your classmates (see below). During the sessions, please engage in discussion actively. Alternative forms of participation will also be recognized.

Reading Responses (20%) Write responses (3-4 pages, double spaced) to the assigned readings for the weeks of your choice and email them to the class two days before the relevant seminar (Tuesday noon if you need a firm deadline). The reading responses may take a variety of forms, but should include basic ideas and arguments of the readings, and more importantly your own questions, comments, and reflections. You are also welcome to draw on materials outside assigned readings.

* The syllabus is a general plan for the course; updates and revisions may be necessary.
Book Review (20%)  Write a book review of one or more books related to the course. In the essay, you shall summarize the argument, compare/contrast the book to course readings and other studies, and offer your own critique. Focus on analysis/critique and develop one coherent theme rather than providing a “laundry list” of summary.

Research Paper (40%)  Write a paper on a topic of your choice. The paper should start with an empirical or theoretical puzzle, present relevant hypotheses based on existing literature, and test your hypotheses with empirical data. You are encouraged to employ innovative research methods, including but not limited to online ethnography, computer-aided content analysis, survey experiment. You can produce a full-fledged research paper or a solid research design. You are expected to present your project for feedback from the class before submitting the final paper. Please email your proposal or paper to the class beforehand and include your major concerns and the types of comments and suggestions you are seeking.

Note: If you are submitting the same paper to two or more courses, please make sure that the paper meets the expectation of each course. Failing to do so may result in lower grades from both/all courses.

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. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:  • If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit https://sco.uga.edu/. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.
  • UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) or crisis support (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies).
  • If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
  • Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Additional Ground Rules and Resources:  • On preferred names/pronouns. “Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.”
Prohibition on recording lectures. “In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:
  o Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
  o Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
  o Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
  o Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
  o Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
  o Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.”

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (August 17): Welcome! Course Introduction

WEEK 2 (August 24) Digital Media & Web Spirits
# Rebecca MacKinnon, Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle for Internet Freedom (Basics Books, 2012), Parts 2, 3, and 5. [E-version available from UGA library]
Discussants: 1) 2)
WEEK 3 (August 31) Instructor out of town.

Watch Movie on Your Own: The Social Dilemma (2020)

WEEK 4 (September 7) Digital Media and Politics: A Quick Survey


Discussants: 1) 2)

WEEK 5 (September 14) Not Everyone is Born Equal in Digital Era


Discussants: 1) 2)

WEEK 6 (September 21) Digital Media and E-Governance


Discussants: 1) 2)
WEEK 7 (September 28) Digital Media & Democracy, and Electoral Politics


* Richard Wike et. al, “Social Media Seen as Mostly Good for Democracy Across Many Nations, But U.S. is a Major Outlier,” *Pew Research Center*, December 2022, p. 4-42.

Discussants: 1) 2)

WEEK 8 (October 5) Misinformation, Disinformation, and Democracy


Discussants: 1) 2)

WEEK 9 (October 12) Digital Surveillance in Democracies


Discussants: 1) 2)
WEEK 10 (October 19) The Power of Digital Media and Mobilization


Discussants: 1) 2)

WEEK 11 (October 26) Digital Media and High-Capacity Autocracies (China Case)


Discussants: 1) 2)
WEEK 12 (November 2) Digital Politics across Boundaries: Cyber Terrorism and Cyber War


Discussants: 1) 2)

WEEK 13 (November 9) Digital Future?

* Samantha Cole, “There is No Tech Solution to Deepfakes,” Motherboard (August 14, 2018).

WEEK 14 (November 16) Digital Media and Research Methods Innovation


Discussants: 1) 2)

WEEK 15 (November 30) Class Presentation

Final Paper due December 12