

INTL 8405 Comparative Politics & Digital Media*

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The University of Georgia

Location: Candler Hall 117

Class Time: Thursdays, 3:55-6:45 pm

Office: 322 Candler Hall

Office Hours: By appointment

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 to 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

A 93-100	A- 90-92	B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72	D 60-69	F 0-59

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:
 - Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
 - Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
 - 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

- * Merrill Morris and Christine Ogan, “The Internet as Mass Medium,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 1:4 (1996).

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]
 - * Tim Berners-Lee, “Long Live the Web: A Call for Continued Open Standards and Neutrality,” *Scientific American Magazine* (December 2010), 80-85.
 - * Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison, “Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13:1 (2007), 210–230.
 - * Tim Wu and Christopher Yoo, “Keeping the Internet Neutral?: Tim Wu and Christopher Yoo Debate” *Federal Communications Law Journal* 59:3 (2007), 575-592.
 - * John Perry Barlow, “[A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace](#),” EFF, Feb. 8, 1996.
 - * Julia Pohle and Thorsten Thiel, “Digital Sovereignty.” *Internet Policy Review*, 9:4 (2020), 1–19.
- Suggested:* Jose van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity* (Oxford U Press, 2013).
- * Kelton, Maryanne, et al. “Virtual Sovereignty? Private Internet Capital, Digital Platforms and Infrastructural Power in the United States.” *International Affairs*, 98:6 (2022), 1977-99.

Discussants: 1)

2)

WEEK 7 (September 28) Digital Media & Democracy, and Electoral Politics

- * Philip N. Howard, “Deep Democracy, Thin Citizenship: The Impact of Digital Media in Political Campaign Strategy,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 597:1 (2005), 153-170.
- * Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “Messages, Micro-Targeting, and New Media Technologies,” *The Forum* 11:3 (2013), 429-435.
- * Sasha Issenberg, “How President Obama's Campaign Used Big Data to Rally Individual Voters,” *MIT Technology Review*, December 19, 2012.
- * Daniel Kreiss, “Book Review: ‘Social Media and Democracy: The State of the Field, Prospects for Reform,’” *International Journal of Press/Politics* 26: 2 (2021), 505–12.
- * 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

- * Deen Freelon and Chris Wells. “Disinformation as Political Communication,” *Political Communication* 37:2 (2020), 145–56.
- * Caroline Jack, [Lexicon of Lies: terms for Problematic Information](#), Data & Society (2017).
- * Nir Grinberg, Kenneth Joseph, Lisa Friedland, Briony Swire-Thompson, and David Lazer, “Fake news on Twitter during the 2016 U.S. presidential election,” *Science* 363, no. 6425 (January 25, 2019): 374–78.
- * New Knowledge, *The Tactics & Tropes of the Internet Research Agency* (2018), pp. 76-101. Available: <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/533-read-report-internet-research-agency/7871ea6d5b7bedafb19/optimized/full.pdf#page=1>
- * Christopher A. Bail et al, “[Assessing the Russian Internet Research Agency’s impact on the political attitudes and behaviors of American Twitter users in late 2017](#),” *PNAS* (2019), pp. 1-8.

Katherine Clayton et al., “Real Solutions for Fake News? Measuring the Effectiveness of General Warnings and Fact-Check Tags in Reducing Belief in False Stories on Social Media,” *Political Behavior*, 42:4 (2020), 1073–1095.

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

WEEK 9 (October 12) Digital Surveillance in Democracies

- Glenn Greenwald, *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State* (Picador, 2015).
- * Yochai Benkler, “A Free Irresponsible Press” *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 46:2 (2011), 311-397.

Discussants: 1) _____ 2) _____

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

Gabriel Weimann, *Terrorism in Cyberspace: The Next Generation* (Columbia University Press, 2015). [[E-version available from UGA library](#)]

* Jon Lindsay, “Stuxnet and the Limits of Cyber Warfare,” *Security Studies* 22:3 (2013): 365-404.

* Emily Parker, “Hack Job: How America Invented Cyberwar,” *Foreign Affairs* May/June (2017).

Discussants: 1) 2)

WEEK 13 (November 9) Digital Future?

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

* Stanford GSB, *Blockchain for Social Impact: Moving Beyond the Hype*, Center for Social Innovation at Stanford GSB in collaboration with Rippleworks Foundation. [Pay special attention to the Executive summary & Democracy and Governance sections]

* Xiao Qiang, “The Road to Digital Unfreedom,” *Journal of Democracy* 30:1 (2019), 53-67.

* Shoshana Zuboff, “Big other: surveillance capitalism and the prospects of an information civilization,” *Journal of Information Technology* (2015) 30, 75–89.

* Jack Goldsmith & Andrew K. Woods, “[Internet Speech Will Never Go Back to Normal](#),” *The Atlantic*, April 2020.

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

* Zeynep Tufekci, “Engineering the Public: Big Data, Surveillance and Computational Politics,” *First Monday* 19: 7 (2014).

* Justin Grimmer, “We’re All Social Scientists Now: How Big Data, Machine Learning, and Causal Inference Work Together,” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 48:1 (2015), 80-83.

* Kate Crawford, Kate Miltner, and Mary Gray, “Critiquing Big Data: Politics, Ethics, Epistemology,” *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014), 1663-1672.

* Michael Lieberman, “Visualizing Big Data: Social Network Analysis,” CASRO Digital Research Conference, San Antonio, Texas (March 11-12, 2014).

* Angela Cora Garcia, Alecea I. Standlee, Jennifer Bechkoff, and Yan Cui, “Ethnographic Approaches to the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 38: 1 (2009), 52-84.

* Byron Reeves et al., “Screenomics: A Framework to Capture and Analyze Personal Life Experiences and the Ways That Technology Shapes Them,” *Human-Computer Interaction*, 36:2 (2021), 150–201.

Discussants: 1) 2)

WEEK 15 (November 30) Class Presentation

Final Paper due December 12