INTL 4665: Global Politics and Digital Media

Dr. Rongbin Han
(Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:35 - 10:50; Sanford Hall 314)
Office Hours: Tuesdays 15:00-16:00 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

Final Grade Ranges:
- A 93-100
- B+ 87-89.99
- B 83-86.99
- B- 80-82.99
- C+ 77-79.99
- C 73-76.99
- C- 70-72.99
- D 60-69.99
- F 0-59.99

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.

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 January 19, you shall submit the response paper by January 17 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.

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 800-1000 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

March 14 Midterm Case Report Due
May 1 Summary of Digital Media Experiment or Final Reflection due
May 9 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 (January 9 & 11) Introduction to the course
Tuesday Meeting & Greeting
Thursday Comparative Framework

Week 2 (January 16 & 18) Media, Media Systems, and Regime Types
Tuesday Media, Democracy and News Production in the U.S.
  # USAID Center for Democracy and Governance, Role of Media in Democracy, June 1999.
Thursday China: An example of Authoritarian Media System

The Digital Era

Week 3 (January 23 & 25)
Tuesday History of Social Media and Politics in the Digital Era—Overview
  * Williams and Carpini, After Broadcast News, Chapter 5.
Thursday History of Social Media and Politics in the Digital Era—Overview

Week 4 (January 30 & February 1)
Tuesday Governability of the Internet?
  # Lawrence Lessig, Code 2.0 (Basic Books, 2006), Chapters 1-2.
Thursday Governing the Internet-Global Governance
  * Recommended: EU & General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), https://gdpr-info.eu/
Week 5 (February 6 & 8) Governing the Internet

Tuesday Governing the Internet—Cyber-Sovereignty

Thursday Governing the Internet—Continued

Week 6 (February 13 &15)

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

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

Week 7 (February 20 & 22)

Tuesday Network Neutrality

Thursday 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.
Week 8 (February 27 & 29)

Tuesday **Digital Media and Privacy**


Thursday **Deep Web, Hacking, and Hacker Practice**


Week 9 Spring Break

Week 10 (March 12 & 14)

Tuesday **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).

Thursday **Watch Movie on your own: Deep Web (2015)**

Week 11 (March 19 & 21)

Tuesday **Digital Media and Activism**


Thursday **Digital Media and Authoritarian Politics**

Week 12 (March 26 & 28) Digital Media and Democracy

Tuesday

Thursday

Week 13 (April 2 & 4) Misinformation, Disinformation, and Democracy

Tuesday

Thursday

Week 14 (April 9 & 11)

Tuesday Wiki Leaks, NSA, and Snowden

Thursday Watch Movie on Your Own: Snowden (2016)

Week 15 (April 16 & 18) Cyber Warfare and Cyber Terrorism

Tuesday Cyber Warfare

Thursday Cyber Terrorism
**Week 16 (April 23 & 25)**

**Tuesday Technological Evolution and Future Implications**

* 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]

**Thursday Technology, State, and the Business**