Course Syllabus

INTL 4665: Global Politics and Digital Media

Spring 2026

Pre-requisites: INTL 3200 or INTL3200E or INTL3200H or INTL 3300 or INTL3300E or INTL3300H

Course Meeting Times

Class Meeting Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:35 - 12:55

Class Meeting Location: Baldwin Hall 322

Instructor & TA Information

Instructor: Dr. Rongbin Han

Email: email via eLC

Office Hours: Tuesdays 15:00-16:00 or by Appointment, Candler Hall 322

Website: https://spia.uga.edu/faculty-member/rongbin-han/

The best way to contact the instructor is via email. Emails are normally returned within 24 hours during working days. Please reach out if you do not receive a response beyond the timeframe.

Course Description & Details

The course introduces students to the intriguing relationship between media and politics, with special attention to two empirical cases: the United States and China.

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-level Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course you should be able to:

1. recall and apply key concepts in international affairs (e.g., the international system, actors in the international system, the principles of sovereignty and anarchy).
2. compare and contrast various political systems and consider their advantages and disadvantages from the perspective of different societal actors.
3. explain, critique, and apply the major theoretical approaches and models used within international relations and comparative politics.

4. evaluate the causes and effects of historical and contemporary global events, by choosing and applying appropriate theoretical models, interpreting and contextualizing past research findings, and/or analyzing empirical data (qualitative or quantitative).
5. locate sources of data and evaluate their credibility and their appropriateness for testing a given theory or hypothesis.
6. articulate opinions on certain global issues, informed by the application of theoretical models, research findings, and/or empirical data (qualitative or quantitative).
7. express their opinions on certain global issues through formal writing assignments and have the opportunity to revise and refine their writing in response to feedback from the instructor.
8. identify the key components of social science research.
9. appreciate and analyze policy interdependence--that is, how the choices that one actor or group of actors make (e.g., citizens, firms, countries) affect the lives and decisions of other actors or groups of actors.

COURSE TOPICS

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Media and Politics in Democracies and Non-Democracies
- 3. Comparing Media Systems
    - Media as Political Institution in the United States
    - Media as Political Institution in China
- 4. Digital Politics in Democratic, Non-Democratic and Transitioning Regimes

Required Course materials

Course materials will be made available on ELC or through UGA Library.

Assessment and Grading

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 summarize 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? Explain how you see how digital media has (or has not) changed socio-political life today. Talk to the instructor if you have questions regarding selection of the topic.

Movie Review (5%) Please select one movie we watch 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.

Digital Media Experiment or *Final Reflection Essay* (35%) You may conduct a digital media experiment to learn about the impact of digital media on our social life or factors that shape the effects of 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 also write a final reflection essay addressing one of the following two topics**: (1) What can the United States (including the government, platforms, individuals, etc.) do about disinformation (and the implications)? (2) The challenges of AI and how we shall regulate the development of the technology.

See eLC for more information about each course requirement, including the updated due dates.

Missed Exams, Late Assignments, & Re-grading Requests

Please submit your assignments timely. Late assignments will be accepted, though for fairness, it may result in a penalty of one third of a letter grade per day. For questions about your 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 the regrading process may end up with higher, lower or no change in your grade.

Final Grades

A 93-100	A- 90-92.99	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

Course Statements & Policies

UGA Honor Code

As a University of Georgia student, you agree 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.

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the *Accessibility & Testing*. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting https://accessibility.uga.edu/.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION POLICY

The course is discussion based. You are expected to attend the class and be prepared to engage in discussion. Please notify the instructor should you have any legitimate reasons to be absent.

POLICY 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.

USE OF AI IN THIS COURSE

UGA's policy is that the use of AI for coursework is not permitted unless explicitly authorized by me (your course instructor) ahead of time. In this class***use of GAI tools should be limited to providing support as you develop your thinking and knowledge base.*** In addition, there are some general rules to follow:

- Please note that you may not represent output generated by a GAI tool as your own work. Any such use of GAI output must be appropriately cited or disclosed, including quotation marks and in-line citations for direct quotes. Including anything you did not write in your assignment without proper citation will be treated as an academic misconduct case. Suspected unauthorized assistance, plagiarism, or other violations of UGA's "A Culture of Honesty," will be reported to the Office of Academic Honesty. For full details on how to properly cite AI-generated work, please see the APA Style article, How to Cite ChatGPT, for instance
- If you are unsure where the line is between collaborating with GAI and copying from GAI, I recommend that you do not have your assignment and the GAI tool open on your device at the same time. Instead, take notes in your own words while you interact with the GAI tool, then use your notes to remind you of what you've learned and to inform your work. Never copy output from GAI tools into your assignment. Instead, use your interaction with the tool as a learning experience, then close the interaction down, open your assignment, and let your assignment reflect your improved understanding. (Sidenote: This advice extends to AI assistants that are directly integrated into a composition environment or grammar modulation tool.)

- Finally, GAI is highly vulnerable to inaccuracy and bias. You should assume GAI output is wrong unless you either know the answer or can verify it with another source. It is your responsibility to assess the validity and applicability of any GAI output used.

UGA Well-being Resources

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
- Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
- University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
- Accessibility & Testing: accessibility.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting well-being.uga.edu.

Student Success Resources

The Office for Student Success and Achievement (OSSA) empowers students to achieve success throughout their academic journey. Through free peer tutoring, academic coaching, UNIV student success courses, Bulldog Basics, and first-generation student support, we promote well-being, student learning, and community building. To connect with OSSA, email *ossa@uga.edu*, call (706) 542-0163, or visit Milledge Hall (near Reed Hall and Sanford Stadium).

Disclaimer

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Course Schedule & Activities

Week 1 (January 13 & 15) Introduction to the course
Tuesday **Meeting & Greeting**

Thursday **Comparative Framework**

Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, "*Comparing Media Systems,"* in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch (Eds.), *Mass Media and Society* (Bloomsbury USA, 2005), Chapter 11.

Week 2 (January 20 & 22) Media, Media Systems, and Regime Types

Tuesday **Media, Democracy and News Production in the U.S.**

* Bruce A. Williams and Michael X. Delli Carpini, *After Broadcast News: Media Regimes, Democracy, and the New Information Environment* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), Chapter 2.

USAID Center for Democracy and Governance, *Role of Media in Democracy*, June 1999.

Thursday **China: An example of Authoritarian Media System**

* David Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System," *The China Journal* 57 (2007), 25-58.
* Daniela Stockmann and Mary Gallagher, "Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China," *Comparative Political Studies* 44:4 (2011), 436-467.

The Digital Era

Week 3 (January 27 & 29)

Tuesday **History of Social Media and Politics in the Digital Era—Overview**

* Williams and Carpini, *After Broadcast News*, Chapter 5.

* Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13:1 (2007), 210–230.

Suggested: Jose van Dijck, *The Culture of Connectivity* (Oxford U Press, 2013).

Thursday **Theoretical Perspectives**

* Manuel Castells, "A Network Theory of Power," *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011), 773-787.

* Yochai Benkler, "Networks of Power, Degrees of Freedom" *International Journal of Communication* 5(2011), 721-755.

* Mitchell Kapor and John Perry Barlow, "Across the Electronic Frontier," EFF, July 10, 1990.

Week 4 (February 3 & 5) Governing the Internet

Tuesday **Governability of the Internet?**

Lawrence Lessig, *Code 2.0* (Basic Books, 2006), Chapters 1-2.

* John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," EFF, Feb. 8, 1996.

* Justin Fox, "No One Actually Knows How to Regulate the Internet," *Harvard Business Review* (Nov. 18, 2014).

Thursday **Governing the Internet-Global Governance**

* Nanette S. Levinson and Meryem Marzouki, "International Organizations and Global Internet Governance: Interorganizational Architecture," in Francesca Musiani et al (eds) *The Turn to Infrastructure in Internet Governance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 47-71.

* Gautham Hagesh, "ICANN 101: Who Will Oversee the Internet?" Wall Street Journal, March 17, 2014.

* Recommended: EU & General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), https://gdpr-info.eu/

Week 5 (February 10 & 12) Governing the Internet

Tuesday **Governing the Internet—Cyber-Sovereignty**

* Tim Wu, "Cyberspace Sovereignty?—The Internet and International System," *Harvard Journal of Law & Technology* 10:3 (1997), 648-666.

* John Perry Barlow, "Decrypting the Puzzle Palace," *EFF, July 1992.*

* Merrit Kennedy, "New Russian Law Gives Government Sweeping Power Over Internet," *NPR*, November 1, 2019.

* Jessica Baron, "Cyber-Sovereignty and China's Great Firewall: An Interview with James Griffiths," *Forbes*, April 8, 2019.

* Wanshu Cong and Johannes Thumfart, "A Chinese Precursor to the Digital Sovereignty Debate," *Global Studies Quarterly* 2(4).

Thursday **Governing the Internet—Peer Governance**

* David R. Johnson, Susan P. Crawford, and John G. Palfrey, "The Accountable Net: Peer Production of Internet Governance," *Virginia Journal of Law and Technology* 9: 97 (2004), 1–33.

* Michel J. G. van Eeten and Milton Mueller, "Where Is the Governance in Internet Governance?," *New Media & Society* 15:5 (2013), 720–36.

Week 6 (February 17 &19)

Tuesday **Platforms and Big Internet Corporations**

* Shaleen Khanal, Hongzhou Zhang, Araz Taeihagh, "Why and how is the power of Big Tech increasing in the policy process? The case of generative AI," *Policy & Society* 00:00(2024), 1-18.

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

Week 7 (February 24 & 26)

Tuesday **Digital Equality**

* Tim Berners-Lee, “Long Live the Web: A Call for Continued Open Standards and Neutrality,” *Scientific American Magazine* (Dec. 2010), 80-85.

* Rob Frieden, “Keeping the Internet Neutral?: A Response to the Wu-Yoo Debate,” *Federal Communications Law Journal* 59:3 (2007), 621-624.

* Karl Vick, “The Digital Divide: A Quarter of the Nation Is Without Broadband,” *Time*, March 30, 2017.

* Laura Silver et al, *Mobilize Divides in Emerging Economies*, Pew Research Center, 2019, pp. 3-24 [Quick read].

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

Thursday **Digital Media and Privacy**

* B. Wessels, “Identification and the Practices of Identity and Privacy in Everyday Digital Communication,” *New Media & Society* 14, no. 8 (2012), 1251–68.

* Danah Boyd, "The Politics of 'Real Names': Power, Context, and Control in Networked Publics," *Communications of the ACM* 55:8(2012), 29-31.

* Roshni Chakraborty, “The Deep Web: For the Nefarious or the Democratic?” *Harvard International Review* 39:4 (2018), 18-21.

Week 8 (March 3 & 5)

Tuesday **News Industry in the Digital Age**

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

* Joshua Braun and Tarleton Gillespie, “Hosting the public discourse, hosting the public,” *Journalism Practice* 5:4 (2011), 383-398.

* Noah Shachtman, “How Andrew Breitbart Hacks the News” *Wired Magazine* (March 2010).

Thursday **Digital Economy**

Lizhi Liu, From Click to Boom: The Political Economy of E-commerce in China (Princeton University Press, 2024), Chapter 1.

Week 9 Spring Break

Week 10 (March 17 & 19) Digital Media and Authoritarian Politics

Tuesday **Digital Media and Social Activism**

* Clay Shirky, “The Political Power of Social Media,” *Foreign Affairs* (Jan. 2011), 28-41.

* Malcolm Gladwell, “Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted,” *New Yorker* (October 4, 2010).

* Lev Grossman, “Iran Protests: Twitter, the Medium of the Movement,” *Time* (June 17, 2009).

* William Lafi Youmans, and Jillian C. York, “Social Media and the Activist Toolkit,” *Journal of Communication* 62:2(2012), 315–29.

* Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, “The Logic of Connective Action,” *Information, Communication and Society* 15:5(2012), 739-768.

Thursday **Authoritarian Response to Digital Challenges**

* Rongbin Han, “Manufacturing Consent in Cyberspace,” *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 44:2(2015), 105–134

* Neil MacFarquhar, “Russia Quietly Tightens Reins on Web with ‘Bloggers Law’,” *New York Times* (May 7, 2014).

* Kathleen Hartford, “Dear Mayor: Online Communications with Local Governments in Hangzhou and Nanjing,” *China Information* 19: 2 (2005), 217–60.

Week 11 (March 24 & 26) Digital Media and Democracy

Tuesday

* Michael L. Miller and Cristian Vaccari, “Digital Threats to Democracy: Comparative Lessons and Possible Remedies,” *International Journal of Press/Politics* 25: 3 (2020), 333–56.

Thursday

* Seth Flaxman, Sharad Goel, and Justin M. Rao, “Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80:1(2016), 298–320.

* Elizabeth Dubois & Grant Blank, “The echo chamber is overstated: the moderating effect of political interest and diverse media,” *Information, Communication, and Society* 21:5(2018), 729-745.

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

*Issie Lapowsky, "How Bots Broke the FCC's Public Comment System," *Wired* (Nov. 28, 2017).

Week 12 (March 31 & April 2) Misinformation, Disinformation, and Democracy

Tuesday

* 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).

Thursday

* Nir Grinberg et al., “Fake news on Twitter during the 2016 U.S. presidential election,” *Science* 363, no. 6425 (January 25, 2019): 374–78.

* 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.

* Kozyreva, Anastasia et al., "Toolbox of Individual-Level Interventions against Online Misinformation." *Nature Human Behaviour* (2024).

Week 13 (April 7 & 9)

Tuesday **Wiki Leaks, NSA, and Snowden**

* Yochai Benkler, "A Free Irresponsible Press" *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 46:2 (2011), 311-397. [Read 311-350 only]

* Lisa Lynch, "We're Going to Crack the World Open," *Journalism Practice*, 4: 3 (2010), 309-318.

* Edward Snowden entry of Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Snowden]

Thursday **Watch Movie on Your Own: Snowden (2016)**

Week 14 (April 14 & 16) Cyber Warfare and Cyber Terrorism

Tuesday **Cyber Warfare**

* 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).

* Michael Schmidt, "Chinese Hackers Extending Reach to Smaller U.S. Agencies, Officials Say," *New York Times* (July 16, 2014).

Thursday **Cyber Terrorism**

Gabriel Weimann, *Terrorism in Cyberspace* (Columbia U Press, 2015), Ch. 1 [esp. pp. 15-46].

Week 15 (April 21 & 23)

Tuesday **Technological Evolution and Future Implications**

* 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.

Thursday **Instructor out of town for conference. Watch a movie on your own**

The Matrix (1999) or **Enemy of the State** (1998)