

THE INTERNET AND DEMOCRACY

Journalism and Mass Communication 880 – Fall 2006
5013 Vilas Communication Hall
Thursday 2:30 – 4:30

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Course Description:

This course examines the connection between the Internet and civic and political life, the linkages between new media and new community building and governance processes. We will consider a variety of perspective on these issues — sociological, psychological, legal, and political, to name a few — placing the implications of technology for democratic functioning at the center of our inquiry. Accordingly, the course will focus on the complex interrelationships between the various uses of the Internet by democratic citizens and the health of communities and societies. A majority of our efforts will concern research conducted in Western democracies, mainly America, though research focusing on other parts of the world is also considered.

Course Requirements:

Grades in the class will be based on the following: (1) final research paper — 50%, (2) review reports as class discussant — 20%, (3) completion of weekly writing assignment — 15%, AND (4) participation in and contributions to seminar — 15%.

Research Paper

The major requirement for this course is an original research paper written individually by each student and presented to other seminar participants. The paper should grow out of one of the topical areas covered in the course and contain the following sections: (1) brief introduction, (2) literature review, (3) statement of research questions, hypotheses, or models,

(4) actual or proposed methodology, (5) results or proposed analytic strategy, (6) concluding discussion about what was or will be learned. The goal of the paper is to contribute, however modestly, to research in the area of the Internet and democracy. If possible, the paper should present findings based on the collection of original data or existing data sets (e.g., National Election Study, General Social Survey, DDB Life Style Archive, The Pew Internet and American Life Project, MCRC Archive, etc.). Whether or not you present data, your work should attempt to synthesize what we encounter in class with your own interests. I would prefer the approach reflect an empirical component, though the methodology need not be quantitative. Some of you may wish to extend projects you have developed elsewhere or to refine ideas toward completion of a thesis; please consult with me if this is the case.

Your paper will be evaluated on whether it integrates the materials and discussions in the class into coherent and testable propositions that have implications for theory development. Your research paper should reflect an original extension of the ideas we have encountered in class, not a simple recapitulation of past work. A two-page prospectus for your seminar paper is due on November 16. Seminar presentations will be December 14 (starting at 2:30 and going until we are done!). The final paper is due December 19 by 4:00 and should be between 15 – 20 pages of text, NOT including cover, bibliography, tables, and figures. **This paper will be worth 50 percent of your final grade.**

Review Reports

In addition, every student will be required to serve as a discussant for two class sessions. Discussants will write a 6 to 8 page **summary and critique** of the week's readings and provide a brief list of questions to facilitate discussion. As a discussant, you will be responsible for leading student discussion of the readings by pointing out what you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the readings and encouraging debate about your reflections. You will read and cover all the readings for that week. Ideally, you will choose a week that coincides with your broader interests. That way, your review of the reading materials will be useful to you when preparing your paper. Review reports will be sent to the class list 12-hours before class at a rich text format (.rtf) attachment to an email. These

reports will also be reviewed and returned to the discussant by the next class period. **This work will be worth 20 percent of your final grade.**

Comment Papers:

Every week you will produce a brief set of written comments on the readings. These comment papers should be 1-2 pages on average, though they may be shorter on weeks that are of less interest to you and longer on weeks that you feel inspired. Papers do not need to follow any particular format or necessarily cover all the readings, as long as they illustrate that you made an effort to process that week's reading and have reflected on the research you encountered. Some of you may use these comment papers to summarize the key points of each of the readings into notes for their own future use. Others may organize their comments into critical essays or critiques on the general themes of the week. Yet others may focus on detailed reviews of a few readings or even a single reading, digging deeply into a topic of particular interest. Bring your comment papers to class and turn them in to me at the end.

If you do not complete your comment paper for a particular week, do not avoid class. You may miss 3 of the 9 weeks that you are not a discussant. Come to seminar, listen and learn, and comment when you can. **These six comment papers will be worth 15 percent of your final grade;** evaluation will be based on the number completed and their quality; if you want a evaluation of your ongoing performance on the papers, please come and see me. You should not complete a comment paper on the week you are the discussant.

Seminar Participation:

The final 15 percent of your class grade will be based on contributions to seminar discussion. It is not enough that you just come to class. You must actively discuss the readings and critically analyze their contents. At the same time, each student must contribute to a classroom environment in which ideas are debated in a respectful way.

Course Policies:

- Students must notify the professor within the first two weeks of class of any specific days that they will miss class for religious observance.
- If a student cannot complete an assignment at the scheduled time, arrangements must be made in advance with the instructor. Failure to do so will result in the reduction of one grade level (at a minimum) from the earned score. Exemptions may be made.
- Permission to receive an incomplete grade (I) is at the discretion of the instructor and must be accompanied by a written contract for completion of course requirements. Failure to complete assignments is not acceptable reasons for an incomplete.
- This class will follow University and L&S guidelines concerning scholastic misconduct and grievance procedures.
- The course syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request. Please see the undergraduate advisor if you need an alternative format due to a disability.

Course Readings

Week 1, September 7: Introduction

Week 2, September 14: The Internet and Democracy: Theoretical Foundations

Discussants: Leticia Bode / Brian Ekdale

- Bimber, B. (1998). The Internet and political transformation: Populism, community, and accelerated pluralism. *Polity*, 31, 133-60.
- DiMaggio, P., Hargittai, E., Neuman, W. R., & Robinson, J. P. (2001). Social implications of the Internet, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27: 307-336.
- Graber, D.A., Bimber, B., Bennett, W. L., Davis, R., & Norris P. (2004). The Internet and politics: Emerging perspectives. In *Academy & The Internet*, edited by H. Nissenbaum and M. E. Price (p. 90-119). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Haythornthwaite, C. & Wellman, B. (2002). An introduction. In *The Internet in Everyday Life*, edited by B. Wellman and C. Haythornthwaite (p.3-41). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.'

Week 3, September 21: The Uncertain Impact of the Internet on Sociability

Discussants: Vicki Hearing / Rich Cleland

- Anderson, B., and Tracey, K. (2001) Digital living: The impact (or otherwise) of the Internet on everyday life. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45: 456-475.
- Kraut, R., Kiesler, S., Boneva, B., Cummings, J., Helgeson, V., and Crawford, A. (2002) Internet paradox revisited. *Journal of Social Issues*. 58: 49-74.
- Nie, N. (2001) Sociability, Interpersonal relations, and the Internet: Reconciling conflicting findings. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 45: 420-435
- Nie, N. & Hillygus, D. S. (2002) The impact of Internet use on sociability: Time-diary findings. *IT & Society*, 1: 1-20.

Week 4, September 28: “Wired Community”: The Net, Neighborhoods, and Involvement

Discussants: Brian Ekdale / Cathy DeShano

- Hampton, K. & Wellman, B. (2003). Neighboring in Netville: How the Internet supports community and social capital in a wired suburb. *City & Community*, 2, 277-311.

- Katz, J., Rice, R. and Aspden, P. (2001). The Internet, 1995-2000: Access, civic involvement, and social interaction. *American Behavioral Scientist* 45: 405-419.
- Matei, S., and Ball-Rokeach, S. (2001). Real and virtual social ties: Connections in the everyday lives of seven ethnic neighborhoods. *American Behavioral Scientist* 45:550-564
- Mesch, G. S., & Levanon, Y. (2003). Community networking and locally-based social ties in two suburban localities. *City and Community*, 2: 335 -351

Week 5, October 5: (Questioning) the Mobilizing Potential of Online Information

Discussants: Leticia Bode / Davita Veselenak / Madhu Arora

- Bimber, B. (2001). Information and political engagement in America: The search for effects of information technology at the individual level. *Political Research Quarterly*, 54: 53-67.
- Matei, S. & Ball-Rokeach, S. (2003). The Internet in the communication infrastructure of urban residential communities: Macro- or mesolinkage? *Journal of Communication*. 53 642-657.
- Scheufele, D. A., & Nisbit, M. C. (2002). Being a citizen online: New opportunities and dead ends. *Press/Politics*, 7: 55-75
- Shah, D. V., Kwak, N., & Holbert, R. L., (2001) “‘Connecting’ and ‘disconnecting’ with civic life: Patterns of Internet use and the production of social capital,” *Political Communication*, 18: 141-162.

Week 6, October 12: Online Expression, Deliberation, and Participation

Discussants: Bryan Wang / Jason Mudrock / Cathy DeShano

- Cappella, J. N., Price, V., & Nir, L. (2002) Argument repertoire as a reliable and valid measure of opinion quality: Electronic dialogue during campaign 2000. *Political Communication*, 19: 73-93.
- Iyengar, S., Luskin, R. C., & Fishkin, J. (2004, April). Deliberative preferences in presidential nomination campaigns: Evidence from the online deliberative poll. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington DC, September 1- 4, 2005.
- Jensen, J. L. (2003). Virtual democratic dialogue? Bringing together citizens and politicians. *Information Polity*, 8: 29 –47.

- Shah, D.V., Cho, J., Eveland, W.P., Kwak, N. (2005). Information and expression in a digital age Modeling Internet effects on civic participation. *Communication Research*, 32, 531-565.

Week 7, October 19: NO SEMINAR – “POLITICS OF CONSUMPTION/
CONSUMPTION OF POLITICS” CONFERENCE

Week 8, October 26: Internet and the Individual: Psychological Approaches

Discussants: Kjerstin Thorson / Muzammil Hussain / Timothy Fung

- Eveland, W. P. (2003). A “mix of attributes” approach to the study of media effects and new communication technologies. *Journal of Communication*, 53(3), 395-410.
- Flanagin, A. & Metzger, M. (2001). Internet use in the contemporary media environment. *Human Communication Research*, 27: 153-181.
- Ramierez, A. Jr., Walther, J. B., Burgoon, J. K., & Sunnafrank, M. (2002). Information-seeking strategies, uncertainty, and computer-mediated communication: Toward a conceptual model. *Human Communication Research*, 28: 213-228.
- Sundar, S. S., Kalyanaraman, S. Brown, J. (2003). Explicating web site interactivity: Impression formation effects in political campaign sites. *Communication Research*, 30: 30-59.

Week 9, November 2: Learning from the “New “ News: Insights and Limitations

Discussants: Vicki Hearing / Muzammil Hussain / Kwangjun Heo

- Althaus, S., and Tewksbury, D. (2002) Agenda setting and the “new” news: Patterns of issue importance among readers of the paper and online versions of the New York Times. *Communication Research*. 29: 180-207.
- Borgida, E. & Stark, E. N., (2004). New media and politics: Some insights from social and political psychology. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48: 467-478.
- Hindman, M., Tsioutsoulis, K. & Johnson, J. A. (April, 2003). “Googlearchy”: How a few heavily-linked sites dominate politics on the web. Presented to the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago IL.
- Tewksbury, D. (2003). What do Americans really want to know? Tracking the behavior of news readers on the Internet. *Journal of Communication*, 53: 694-710.

Week 10, November 9:

Party Website, Online Campaigning & E-Democracy

Discussants: Kang Namkoong / Bryan Wang / Kjerstin Thorson

- Iyengar, S. (2001) Making Voters autonomous: The possibility of unmediated political campaigns. Unpublished paper from Stanford University.
- Norris, P. (January, 2004) E-campaigning and e-democracy: Experiments in e-voting v. all postal voting facilities in UK local elections. Paper presented to the Political Communications in the 21st Century conference, University of Otago, New Zealand.
- Stromer-Galley, J. (2000) On-Line Interaction and why candidates avoid it, *Journal of Communication*. 50:111-132.
- Ward, S., & Lusoli, W. (2005). Logging on or switching off? The public and the Internet at the 2005 general election. In Coleman, S., & Ward, S. (eds), *Spinning the web: Online campaigning in the 2005 general election*. Hansard Society.

Week 11, November 16:

Blogs, Blogging, and the Blogosphere: The Fifth Estate?

Discussants: Jason Mudrock / Kwangjun Heo / Ryan Biava

- Adamic, L. A. & Glance, N. (2005). The political blogosphere and the 2004 U.S. election: Divided they blog. *Communications of the ACM*.
- Drezner, D. W. & Farrell, H. (September, 2004). The power and politics of blogs. Paper presented to annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, IL.
- Kerbel, M.R., & Bloom, J.D. (2005). Blog for America and civic involvement. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 10, 3-27.
- Rogers, R. (2005) Poignancy in the US political blogosphere. *New Information Perspectives*. 57: 356-368

Week 12, November 23:

NO SEMINAR – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 13, November 30:

Media Dissociation, Online Activism and Social Protest

Discussants: Madhu Arora / Rich Cleland / Davita Veselenak

- Bennett, W. L., & Givins, T. (2006) Communication and political mobilization: Digital media use and protest organization among anti-Iraq war demonstrators in the U.S. Unpublished manuscript, University of Washington.
- Best, S. J., Chmielewski, B., & Krueger, B. S. (2005). Selective exposure to online foreign news during the conflict with Iraq. *Press/Politics* 10: 52-70.

- Hwang, H., Schmierbach, M. Paek, H-J., Gil de Zuniga, H., and. Shah D. V. (2006) Media dissociation, internet use, and anti-war political participation, *Mass Communication and Society*, 9: 461-483
- Norris, P. (2002) New social movements, protest politics, and the Internet. In *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) (Chapter 10).

Week 14, December 7:

The Internet as a Public Sphere: From Local to Global

Discussants: Ryan Biava / Timothy Fung / Kang Namkoong

- Calhoun, C. (1998). Community without propinquity revisited: Communications technology and the transformation of the urban public sphere. *Sociological Inquiry*, 68, 373-397.
- Dahlgren, P. (2005). The Internet, public spheres, and political communication: Dispersion and deliberation. *Political Communication*, 22, 147-162.
- Muhlberger, P. (2005). Human agency and the revitalization of the public sphere. *Political Communication*, 22, 163-178.
- Scammell, M. (2000) The Internet and civic engagement: The age of the citizen-consumer. *Political Communication*. 17: 351-355
- Yang, G. (2003) The Internet and civil society in China: A preliminary assessment. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 12: 453-475.

Week 15, December 14:

Research presentations

Pot Luck and Presentations as Dhavan's House

3:00 – 9:00?

Timed 8-10 minute presentation

10-15 minutes of discussion

Additional Suggested Readings

Suggested “Modern Classics” Books:

- Bimber, B (2003) *Information and American Democracy : Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Castells, M. (2001) *The Internet Galaxy. Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Davis, R. (1999) *The Web of Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hacker, L. L., & van Dijk, J. (2000). *Digital democracy: Issues of theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hill, K A. and Hughes, J. E. (1998) *Cyberpolitics*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing.
- Kalathil, S. and Boas, T. C. (2002) *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Lessig, L. (2002). *Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Maarek, P. J., & Wolfsfeld, G. (2003). *Political communication in a new era: A cross-national perspective*. New York: Routledge.
- Norris, P. (2001) *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rheingold, H. (1993). *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on The Electronic Frontier*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Sirianni, C. & Friedland, L. (2001). *Civic Innovation in America*. New York: Basic Book
- Sunstein, C. R. (2001) *Republic.com*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Turkle, S. (1995) *Life on the Screen : Identity in the Age of the Internet*, New York : Simon & Schuster.
- Wilhelm, A G. (2000) *Democracy in the Digital Age: Challenges to Political Life in Cyberspace*. New York: Routledge.