Digital Media in Politics: 
Syllabus

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Office hours: Wednesdays 16:00–17:00

1 Course Description

The course examines the impact of digital media on politics in international comparison. Digital media play an increasingly important role in politics. Be it political communication, the coverage of politics in the news, campaigning, public discourse, or collective action, various political fields are changing due to digital media. This makes it paramount to identify, assess, and understand the role of digital media in politics. Over the course, students will be introduced to important approaches in conceptualizing and measuring the effects of digital media on politics. In this, we will focus on the role of digital media in helping political actors fulfill specific tasks in their work, such as gaining representation in the political information space, reaching people, convincing and mobilizing people, coordination, organizing, and measuring and evaluating the impact of their actions.

Learning Objectives: Students are able to characterize and identify diverse influences of digital media on various areas and aspects of politics.

2 Requirements

2.1 Regular and active participation

The course features the discussion of the required readings. To benefit from this, students are expected to read the texts listed as required readings before each session and actively participate in the discussion for each session. Don’t be scared off by the Background Readings. Those are meant to offer you a starting point if you decide to dig deeper into one of the topics discussed during the course. They might offer a promising starting point for you, once you start thinking about your term paper. Participation will not be graded.
2.2 Presentation

Students will be asked to present a research paper during one of the topical session. During the first session, each student will be assigned a text from the listed readings for presentations. In preparing the presentations please use the following guiding questions:

1. What is the research question?
2. What are the concepts used in the study?
3. What are the mechanisms proposed in the study?
4. What are the hypotheses? How are they linked with concepts and mechanisms under study?
5. What empirical approach do the authors take? What is the data in use? How are the data analyzed? Does this seem appropriate?
6. What are the results and how are they connected with concepts and mechanisms under study?
7. How does the study related to the topics discussed in the required readings for the respective session?
8. How convincing do you find the arguments presented by the authors?

Beyond these guiding questions, please keep the following considerations in mind in preparing your presentation:

- Please plan your presentation to take between 7-10 minutes;
- Please prepare a slide deck with a presentation program of your choice (except for Prezi);
- Please prepare a handout of one to two pages for your fellow students, summarizing the main points of your presentation;
- Upload the handout on the day your presentation is due to the assignment folder on the course’s OLAT repository. Use the following template for the filename "your_last_name-handout...";
- The presentation will be graded and contribute 30% to your final grade;
- Please make sure to see me at least once during office hours to discuss the topic and scope of your presentation.

2.3 Term Paper

Following the course, students will be asked to hand in a term paper. The aim of this paper is for you to independently develop and present the current state of research on one of the topics discussed during the course. This can take either of two formats:

1. Systematic literature review on aspects related to the topics discussed during the course;
2. Identification of a current research gap in the literature and proposal of a research design addressing this gap.

If you choose to perform a literature review, make sure to use the following guiding questions to assess the plausibility of causal claims:\(^1\)

1. Is there a plausible mechanism for the effect?
2. Does evidence come from peer-reviewed sources?
3. Are all relevant studies considered?
4. Are results of specific studies misrepresented?
5. Are causal claims based on experiment, correlation or analogy?
6. Is technical, scientific terminology used to obfuscate rather than clarify?

For the term paper, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Style requirements:**
  - Font: Times New Roman, 12pt;
  - Line-separation: 1.5;
  - Page borders: 2.5 cm left and right, 2cm above and below;
  - Page set: Block;
  - The first line of each paragraph is indented.

- **Citation Style:** Please follow the citation convention of the American Political Science Review (APSR) available at [http://www.apsanet.org/APSR-Submission-Guidelines-August-2016](http://www.apsanet.org/APSR-Submission-Guidelines-August-2016);

- **Cover page:** University, department, course title, paper title, name, Matriknr., semester count, study program, and e-mail-address;

- **Length:** ca. 3000 words +/-10%

- **Deadline:** Please return the paper by January 10, 2019 electronically at andreas.jungherr@gmail.com and by hardcopy at my University of Konstanz address (Box 85, Universitätsstrasse 10, D–78464 Konstanz). The date is mandatory and can only be extended in case of officially certified illness;

- **Use the following template for the filename "your_last_name-paper...".**

- **The term paper will be graded and contribute 70% to your final grade;**

- **Please make sure to see me at least once during office hours to discuss the topic and scope of your term paper.**

3 Course Outline

Class will meet at the following times and locations:

Fridays, 12:15 - 13:45 (AFL-E-022)
Exception: On Friday, November 30 we will meet in Room AFL-E-020)

3.1 Week 1: Introduction (September 21)
3.2 Week 2: No meeting (September 28)
3.3 Week 3: Media Systems (October 5)
3.4 Week 4: No meeting (October 12)
3.5 Week 5: Publics and Counterpublics (October 19)
3.6 Week 6: Polarization (October 26)
3.7 Week 7: Election Campaigns (November 2)
3.8 Week 8: No meeting (November 9)
3.9 Week 9: Political Participation and Collective Action (November 16)
3.10 Week 10: Data-Driven Campaigning (November 23)
3.11 Week 11: Modes of Control (November 30)
3.12 Week 12: Disinformation and Manipulation (December 7)
3.13 Week 13: Platforms as Political Actors (December 14)
3.14 Week 14: Discussion of Open Questions and Term Paper (December 21)
3.1 Week 1: Introduction (September 21)

Introduction, housekeeping, and assignment of presentations.

Doing Academic Research:

Academic Presentations:

Background Readings: Digital Media and Politics

3.2 Week 2: No meeting (September 28)

3.3 Week 3: Media Systems (October 5)

Required Reading:

Background Readings:
- Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, eds. 2012. Comparing Media Systems Beyond the
Western World. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Presentations:

3.4 Week 4: No meeting (October 12)

3.5 Week 5: Publics and Counterpublics (October 19)

Required Reading:

Background Readings:

Presentations:
3.6 Week 6: Polarization (October 26)

Required Reading:

Background Readings:

Presentations:

3.7 Week 7: Election Campaigns (November 2)

Required Reading:

Background Readings:
Presentations:

3.8 Week 8: No meeting (November 9)

3.9 Week 9: Political Participation and Collective Action (November 16)

Required Reading:

Background Readings:

Presentations:


### 3.10 Week 10: Data-Driven Campaigning (November 23)

**Required Reading:**


**Background Readings:**


**Presentations:**


### 3.11 Week 11: Modes of Control (November 30)

**Required Reading:**


**Background Readings:**


Presentations:

3.12 Week 12: Disinformation and Manipulation (December 7)

Required Reading:

Background Readings:

Presentations:
- Eni Mustafaraj and Panagiotis Takis Metaxas. 2010. “From obscurity to prominence in minutes: Political speech and real-time search”. In WebSci 2010: Proceedings of the
3.13 Week 13: Platforms as Political Actors (December 14)

Required Reading:

Background Readings:

Presentations:

3.14 Week 14: Discussion of Open Questions and Term Paper (December 21)

Required Reading: