

Discursive Power: Syllabus

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1 Course Description

Contemporary societies are in transition. The constellation of organizations, groups, and individuals contributing to national or international information flows has changed as a result of the digital transformation. The “hybrid media system” has proven to be one of the most instructive concepts addressing this change. Its focus on the mutually dependent interconnections between various types of media organizations, actors, and publics has inspired prolific research. Yet the concept can tempt researchers to sidestep systematic analyses of information flows and actors’ differing degrees of influence by treating media systems as a black box. To enable large-scale, empirical comparative studies aimed at identifying interdependencies and power relationships in contemporary information spaces, the concept of discursive power has proven helpful. This describes the ability of contributors to communication spaces to introduce, amplify, and maintain topics, frames, and speakers, thus shaping public discourses and controversies that unfold in interconnected communication spaces. This impacts political competition and provides inputs to the policy process. In the course, we discuss a series of theories to map this process and empirical approaches to analyze its dynamics and determinants.

Level: Students acquire the ability to put together a summary of existing research on a topic.

2 Requirements

2.1 Regular and active participation

Students are expected to regularly attend the sessions and actively participate in the discussions.

2.2 Group discussions

The course will heavily feature group work. In each session groups of three participants will be formed that will work on a discussion question. In order to support your respective group successfully, you are expected to not only read the Required Readings but also scan the literature listed under Conversation Starters.

The results of these group works will be presented during each session and discussed by the group. Active participation in these discussions is expected.

Your positions in these discussions should be based on evidence and refer to the texts you read for the session and other texts relevant to the topics of the day.

Your participation in these discussions will be graded and contribute 20% to your final grade.

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 argument and present evidence on one of the topics covered during the course.

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>;
- Cover page: University, department, course title, paper title, name, Matrikelnr., semester count, study program, and e-mail-address;
- Length: ca. 4000 words +/-10%
- Deadline: Please return the paper on the date specified by the department (15. September) electronically at andreas.jungherr@gmail.com and by hardcopy with Karin Becker (Room D 305). 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.pdf".

- The term paper will be graded and contribute 80% to your final grade.

3 Course Outline

Class will meet at the following dates and times:

Thursday 15:15-16:45 (Online)

- 3.1 Week 1: Introduction (April 30)**
 - 3.2 Week 2: Power, Discursive and Other (May 7)**
 - 3.3 Week 3: Agenda Setting (May 14)**
 - 3.4 Week 4: No meeting—Christi Himmelfahrt (May 21)**
 - 3.5 Week 5: Framing (May 28)**
 - 3.6 Week 6: Discourses in Society (June 4)**
 - 3.7 Week 7: No meeting—Frohnleichnam (June 11)**
 - 3.8 Week 8: Contemporary Media Systems (June 18)**
 - 3.9 Week 9: Gatekeepers (June 25)**
 - 3.10 Week 10: Mis-/Disinformation (July 2)**
 - 3.11 Week 11: The Discursive Power of Experts (July 9)**
 - 3.12 Week 12: Discussion of Open Questions and Term Paper (July 16)**
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3.1 Week 1: Introduction (April 30)

3.2 Week 2: Power, Discursive and Other (May 7)

Group Work:

- Please identify one case in which the concept of “discursive power” is helpful analytically.

Required Reading:

- Isaac Ariail Reed. 2013. “Power: relational, discursive, and performative dimensions”. *Sociological Theory* 31 (3): 193–218. doi:10.1177/0735275113501792.

Background Readings:

- Steven Lukes. 2005. *Power: A Radical View*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms. 2018. *New Power: How Power Works in Our Hyperconnected World—and How to Make It Work for You*. New York: Doubleday.
- David L. Schwartz. 2013. *Symbolic Power, Politics, and Intellectuals: The Political Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Conversation Starters:

- Daniel Kreiss. 2016b. “Seizing the Moment: The Presidential Campaigns’ Use of Twitter During the 2012 Electoral Cycle”. *New Media & Society* 18 (8): 1473–1490. doi:10.1177/1461444814562445.

3.3 Week 3: Agenda Setting (May 14)

Group Work:

- Please develop a research design, identifying the power of agenda setting in media, politics, or publics under contemporary conditions.

Required Reading:

- David H. Weaver and Jihayng Choi. 2017. “The Media Agenda: Who (or What) Sets It?” In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*, ed. by Kate Kenski and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, 359–376. New York: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199793471.013.37.

Background Readings:

- Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones. 2009. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. 2nd ed. Champaign, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Stephen Hilgartner and Charles L. Bosk. 1988. “The Rise and Fall of Social Problems: A Public Arenas Model”. *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1): 53–78. doi:10.1086/228951.
- Maxwell E. McCombs. 2014. *Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and Public Opinion*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Conversation Starters:

- Raymond A. Harder, Julie Sevenans, and Peter Van Aelst. 2017. “Intermedia Agenda Setting in the Social Media Age: How Traditional Players Dominate the News Agenda in Election Times”. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 22 (3): 275–293. doi:10.1177/1940161217704969.
- W. Russell Neuman et al. 2014. “The Dynamics of Public Attention: Agenda-Setting Theory Meets Big Data”. *Journal of Communication* 64 (2): 193–214. doi:10.1111/jcom.12088.
- Chris J. Vargo and Lei Guo. 2017. “Networks, Big Data, and Intermedia Agenda Setting: An Analysis of Traditional, Partisan, and Emerging Online U.S. News”. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 94 (4): 1031–1055. doi:10.1177/1077699016679976.
- Chris Wells et al. 2016. “How Trump Drove Coverage to the Nomination: Hybrid Media Campaigning”. *Political Communication* 33 (4): 669–676. doi:10.1080/10584609.2016.1224416.

3.4 Week 4: No meeting—Christi Himmelfahrt (May 21)

This is an official holiday, so no course meeting on this day.

3.5 Week 5: Framing (May 28)

Group Work:

- Please identify a topic in public debate and isolate competing frames and sponsors. Bonus points if you identify metrics of success for these frames.

Required Reading:

- Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. 2000. “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment”. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:611–639. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611.

Background Readings:

- Rodney Benson. 2014. *Shaping Immigration News: A French-American Comparison*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Porismita Borah. 2011. “Conceptual Issues in Framing Theory: A Systematic Examination of a Decade’s Literature”. *Journal of Communication* 61 (2): 246–263. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01539.x.
- Robert M. Entman. 2004. *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Conversation Starters:

- Robert D. Benford. 2013. “Frame Disputes”. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, ed. by David A. Snow et al. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. doi:10.1002/9780470674871.wbespm092.
- Catherine Corrigan-Brown and Rima Wilkes. 2012. “Picturing Protest: The Visual

Framing of Collective Action by First Nations in Canada”. *American Behavioral Scientist* 56 (2): 223–243. doi:10.1177/0002764211419357.

– Robert M. Entman and Nikki Usher. 2018. “Framing in a Fractured Democracy: Impacts of Digital Technology on Ideology, Power and Cascading Network Activation”. *Journal of Communication* 68 (2): 298–308. doi:10.1093/joc/jqx019.

3.6 Week 6: Discourses in Society (June 4)

Group Work:

- Please identify a topic in public debate and discuss different strands in the discourse around it. Bonus points if you identify ways to say which side is winning.

Required Reading:

– William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani. 1989. “Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach”. *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (1): 1–37. doi:10.1086/229213.

Background Readings:

– Frank R. Baumgartner, Suzanna De Boef, and Amber E. Boydston. 2008. *The Decline of the Death Penalty and the Discovery of Innocence*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

– Kristina Boréus and Göran Bergström, eds. 2017. *Analyzing Text and Discourse: Eight Approaches for the Social Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

– Myra Marx Ferree et al. 2002. *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Conversation Starters:

– Arthur Borriello. 2017. ““There is no alternative”: How Italian and Spanish leaders’ discourse obscured the political nature of austerity”. *Discourse & Society* 28 (3): 241–261. doi:10.1177/0957926516687419.

– Deen Freelon. 2015. “Discourse architecture, ideology, and democratic norms in online political discussion”. *New Media & Society* 17 (5): 772–791. doi:10.1177/1461444813513259.

– Ryan J. Gallagher et al. 2018. “Divergent discourse between protests and counter-protests: #BlackLivesMatter and #AllLivesMatter”. *PLoS One* 13 (4): e0195644. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0195644.

3.7 Week 7: No meeting—Frohnleichnam (June 11)

This is an official holiday, so no course meeting on this day.

3.8 Week 8: Contemporary Media Systems (June 18)

Group Work:

- Please identify a case in which topics, frames, or speakers travelled between different media types in the contemporary media constellation.

Required Reading:

- Andreas Jungherr, Oliver Posegga, and Jisun An. 2019. “Discursive Power in Contemporary Media Systems: A Comparative Framework”. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 24 (4): 404–425. doi:10.1177/1940161219841543.

Background Readings:

- Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris, and Hal Roberts. 2018. *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/os0/9780190923624.001.0001.
- Andrew Chadwick. 2017. *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ralph Schroeder. 2018. *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology and Globalization*. London, UK: UCL Press.
- Bruce A. Williams and Michael X. Delli Carpini. 2011. *After Broadcast News: Media Regimes, Democracy, and the New Information Environment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Conversation Starters:

- W. Lance Bennett and Barbara Pfetsch. 2018. “Rethinking Political Communication in a Time of Disrupted Public Spheres”. *Journal of Communication* 68 (2): 243–253. doi:10.1093/joc/jqx017.
- Jonas Kaiser, Adrian Rauchfleisch, and Nikki Bourassa. 2020. “Connecting the (Far-)Right Dots: A Topic Modeling and Hyperlink Analysis of (Far-)Right Media Coverage during the US Elections 2016”. *Digital Journalism* 8 (3): 422–441. doi:10.1080/21670811.2019.1682629.
- Kjerstin Thorson and Chris Wells. 2016. “Curated Flows: A Framework for Mapping Media Exposure in the Digital Age”. *Communication Theory* 26 (3): 309–328. doi:10.1111/comt.12087.
- Chris J. Vargo, Lei Guo, and Michelle A. Amazeen. 2018. “The agenda-setting power of fake news: A big data analysis of the online media landscape from 2014 to 2016”. *New Media & Society* 20 (5): 2028–2049. doi:10.1177/1461444817712086.

3.9 Week 9: Gatekeepers (June 25)

Group Work:

- Group 1: Please identify 3 elements in which the transformation of gatekeeping through digital media have **strengthened** political discourse.
- Group 2: Please identify 3 elements in which the transformation of gatekeeping through digital media have **weakened** political discourse.

Required Reading:

- Karine Barzilai-Nahon. 2009. “Gatekeeping: A critical review”. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* 43 (1): 1–79. doi:10.1002/aris.2009.1440430117.

Background Readings:

- Axel Bruns. 2018. *Gatewatching and news curation: Journalism, social media, and the public sphere*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Alan Rusbridger. 2018. *Breaking News: The Remaking of Journalism and Why It Matters Now*. Edinburgh, UK: Canongate.
- Pamela J. Shoemaker and Tim P. Vos. 2009. *Gatekeeping theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese. 2014. *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Tim P. Vos and François Heinderyckx, eds. 2015. *Gatekeeping in Transition*. New York: Routledge.

Conversation Starters:

- Marco Toledo Bastos, Rafael Luis Galdini Raimundo, and Rodrigo Travitzki. 2013. “Gatekeeping Twitter: Message diffusion in political hashtags”. *Media, Culture & Society* 35 (2): 260–270. doi:10.1177/0163443712467594.
- Axel Bruns. 2003. “Gatewatching, Not Gatekeeping: Collaborative Online News”. *Media International Australia* 107 (1): 31–44. doi:10.1177/1329878X0310700106.
- Andreas Jungherr, Ralph Schroeder, and Sebastian Stier. 2019. “Digital Media and the Surge of Political Outsiders: Explaining the Success of Political Challengers in the United States, Germany, and China”. *Social Media + Society* 5 (3): 1–12. doi:10.1177/2056305119875439.
- Sharon Meraz and Zizi A. Papacharissi. 2013. “Networked Gatekeeping and Networked Framing on #Egypt”. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 18 (2): 138–166. doi:10.1177/1940161212474472.

3.10 Week 10: Mis-/Disinformation (July 2)

Group Work:

- Group 1: Please **defend** the statement “mis- and disinformation are an immense problem endangering Western democracies”.
- Group 2: Please **challenge** the statement “mis- and disinformation are an immense problem endangering Western democracies”.

Required Reading:

- W. Lance Bennett and Steven Livingston. 2018. “The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions”. *European Journal of Communication* 33 (2): 122–139. doi:10.1177/0267323118760317.

Background Readings:

- Hugo Mercier. 2020. *Not Born Yesterday: The Science of Who We Trust and What We Believe*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Brian Southwell, Emily A. Thorson, and Laura Sheble, eds. 2018b. *Misinformation and Mass Audiences*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Conversation Starters:

- Jennifer Allen et al. 2020. “Evaluating the fake news problem at the scale of the information ecosystem”. *Science Advances* 6 (14): eaay3539. doi:10.1126/sciadv.aay3539.
- Nir Grinberg et al. 2019. “Fake news on Twitter during the 2016 U.S. presidential election”. *Science* 363 (6425): 374–378. doi:10.1126/science.aau2706.
- Andrew Guess, Jonathan Nagler, and Joshua A. Tucker. 2019. “Less than you think: Prevalence and predictors of fake news dissemination on Facebook”. *Science Advances* 5 (1): eaau4586. doi:10.1126/sciadv.aau4586.
- Dan Sperber et al. 2010. “Epistemic Vigilance”. *Mind & Language* 25 (4): 359–393. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0017.2010.01394.x.

3.11 Week 11: The Discursive Power of Experts (July 9)

Group Work:

- Group 1: Please **defend** the statement “people have had enough of experts”.
- Group 2: Please **challenge** the statement “people have had enough of experts”.

Required Reading:

- Daniele Caramani. 2017. “Will vs. Reason: The Populist and Technocratic Forms of Political Representation and Their Critique to Party Government”. *American Political Science Review* 111 (1): 54–67. doi:10.1017/S0003055416000538.
- Dominic Cummings. 2020. ““Two hands are a lot” — we’re hiring data scientists, project managers, policy experts, assorted weirdos...” *Dominic Cummings’s Blog*. <https://dominiccummings.com/2020/01/02/two-hands-are-a-lot-were-hiring-data-scientists-project-managers-policy-experts-assorted-weirdos/>.

Background Readings:

- Eri Bertsou and Daniele Caramani, eds. 2020b. *The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Bent Flyvbjerg. 2001. *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How it Can Succeed Again*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Tom Nicholls. 2017. *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why it Matters*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cathy O’Neil. 2016. *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*. New York: Crown Publishing Group.
- Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein. 2008. *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Conversation Starters:

- Jessica Baldwin-Philippi. 2020. “Data Ops, Objectivity, and Outsiders: Journalistic Coverage of Data Campaigning”. *Political Communication*. doi:10.1080/10584609.2020.1723751.

- Eri Bertsou and Daniele Caramani. 2020a. “People Haven’t Had Enough of Experts: Technocratic Attitudes among European Citizens”. *American Journal of Political Science*. <http://eribertsou.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/BertsouCaramani2019.pdf>.
- Dominic Cummings. 2017d. “Unrecognised simplicities of effective action #1: expertise and a quadrillion dollar business”. *Dominic Cummings’s Blog*. <https://dominiccummings.com/2017/01/13/unrecognised-simplicities-of-effective-action-1-expertise-and-a-quadrillion-dollar-business/>.
- Dominic Cummings. 2017b. “The unrecognised simplicities of effective action #2: ‘Systems engineering’ and ‘systems management’—ideas from the Apollo programme for a ‘systems politics’”. *Dominic Cummings’s Blog*. <https://dominiccummings.files.wordpress.com/2017/02/201702-effective-action-2-systems-engineering-to-systems-politics.pdf>.
- Dominic Cummings. 2017e. “Unrecognised simplicities of effective action #2(b): the Apollo programme, the Tory train wreck, and advice to spads starting work today”. *Dominic Cummings’s Blog*. <https://dominiccummings.com/2017/06/12/the-unrecognised-simplicities-of-effective-action-2b-the-apollo-programme-the-tory-train-wreck-and-advice-to-spads-starting-work-today/>.
- Dominic Cummings. 2017c. “The unrecognised simplicities of effective action #3: lessons on ‘capturing the heavens’ from the ARPA/PARC project that created the internet & PC”. *Dominic Cummings’s Blog*. <https://dominiccummings.com/2017/06/27/the-unrecognised-simplicities-of-effective-action-3-lessons-on-capturing-the-heavens-from-the-arpaparpc-project-that-created-the-internet-pc/>.
- Dominic Cummings. 2018a. “Effective action #4a: ‘Expertise’ from fighting and physics to economics, politics and government”. *Dominic Cummings’s Blog*. <https://dominiccummings.com/2018/05/22/effective-action-4a-expertise-from-fighting-and-physics-to-economics-politics-and-government/>.
- Dominic Cummings. 2018b. “Effective action #4b: ‘Expertise’, prediction and noise, from the NHS killing people to Brexit”. *Dominic Cummings’s Blog*. <https://dominiccummings.com/2018/06/05/effective-action-4b-expertise-prediction-and-noise-from-the-nhs-killing-people-to-brexite/>.
- Felix M. Simon. 2019. ““We power democracy”: Exploring the promises of the political data analytics industry”. *The Information Society* 35 (3): 158–169. doi:10.1080/01972243.2019.1582570.

3.12 Week 12: Discussion of Open Questions and Term Paper (July 16)