MEJO 890
Fault Lines: The Big Debates in Political Communication Research
Monday, 9:30am-12:15pm
Carroll 338

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Overview

Heading into the 2020 US presidential election, the field of political communication is deeply unsettled, as are many democracies around the world. During the past decade, many of the things we thought we knew – from the relationship between the internet and democracy, the importance of political campaigns, and the ways that voters make up their minds to the central role of the press in the political process – have been seemingly upended. Today, scholars are revisiting not only foundational debates over the history and nature of US democracy, and democracies around the world, but also normative questions about what democracy should entail. Meanwhile, the rise of partisanship, polarization, and right-wing movements has provided scholars with new questions about political identities, institutions, norms, and values.

This course will engage students in an interdisciplinary and mixed methods set of readings that broadly offer perspectives on a range of foundational debates in political communication research. The goal of this course is to move beyond the well-established paradigms of the field to consider the big questions of our time and emerging models about the organization, production, and effects of political communication and their democratic consequences. In addition, we will explore new frontiers of research that expand our conceptions and understandings of political communication from scholars of many other disciplines. Indeed, for the purposes of this course, the borders around 'political communication' are deliberately ill-defined - at its broadest, it is the study of the institutional (campaigns, legislative bodies, the presidency, the press, civil society organizations) and extra-institutional (movements) actors, events, processes, cultures, and technologies that constitute democratic life.

Readings

The readings for this course are meant to be thought provoking and push the boundaries of what we consider to be 'political communication.' Accordingly, the reading list for this class is, admittedly, eclectic. Rather than provide a deep dive into one recognized area of the literature, you will read things that come at similar problems from many different theoretical and methodological orientations. Above all, I find these readings interesting. The orientation in this course is also to newer work. A previous version of this course taught all the classics, so to

speak, the syllabus for which can be found here:
https://danielkreiss.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/historystudypolcommunication1.pdf

The full books that you are required to read are:

Chadwick, Andrew. *The hybrid media system*. Oxford University Press, 2013. **Available online through UNC libraries.**

Mason, Lilliana. *Uncivil agreement: How politics became our identity*. University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Peck, Reece. *Fox Populism: Branding Conservatism as Working Class*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Schudson, Michael. *The good citizen: A history of American civic life*. New York: Martin Kessler Books, 1998.

Young, Dannagal Goldthwaite. *Irony and Outrage: The Polarized Landscape of Rage, Fear, and Laughter in the United States*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2019. **Available online through UNC libraries.**

All selected excerpts from books, journal articles, and chapters are easily accessible through the UNC libraries or available on Sakai.

Grades

Graduate grades are H, P, L, F. I determine your grade by active participation in class, the quality of your assignments, and your work in relation to others.

The following is a general description of graduate grades:

• H means a truly outstanding performance in the class and on assignments.

• P is a solid performance overall in the class and on assignments.

• L is a performance in the class and on assignments that is below the acceptable level for graduate students. It means the student does not understand the course material very well, does not have a grasp of what is required in this area at the graduate level, is not participating in the class, is not handing in assignments on time, or is not participating in research basics or in-class exercises.

• F is failing. It means a student occasionally misses class, fails to read the required material, and consistently fails to hand in assignments on time.

Grading Percentages

Participation: 20%
Assignments: 30%
Final Paper: 50%

Course Requirements

Participation

Your participation grade will be assessed based on class attendance, contributions to class discussion, and the quality of your discussion comments.

Attendance and Discussion

This course is a seminar, and as such it is premised on active discussion. You are expected to come to class having completed the readings and ready to discuss them. Critical interpretations of the literature encountered in the course are particularly valued.

Sakai Discussion

You are responsible for posting a long-form discussion comment (about 500 words) each week about the readings on the course Sakai forum. These comments are due by 10pm the night before class. Late comments will be marked F. These comments should be reasoned and developed starting points for group discussion, and they should end with the posing of at least one question that we will take up in class. You are responsible for reading the comments of your peers in advance of class.

Assignments

Assignment grades (H, P, L, F) are based on the thoroughness of your class presentation in opening the text and facilitating class discussion and the quality of your field observation. Late assignments will not be accepted.

"Opening" a Text(s) for Class Discussion: Due Date TBA

At some point in the course you will "open" a text(s) for class discussion. This entails a formal presentation that 1) summarizes the key arguments of the text, 2) details the location of the work in terms of the field of communication and related disciplines, 3) presents and assesses the theoretical and methodological approach(es) of the author(s), 4) and commences class discussion. Your presentation should focus on the relationship between theory, method, and evidence. You are also responsible for facilitating the discussion of the text.

Field Observation

Over the course of the semester, you will conduct *at least one* field observation of an election-related event that you will write up in the style of ethnographic field notes and also document through photographs. This field observation can be conducted at *any election-related event.* Obviously, candidate rallies count, but also field canvasses, voter registration drives, party activities, or the work of various civil society organizations or movements that have some electoral dimension (i.e.: a protest event or a canvass), etc. I define 'election-related' broadly, but if you are in doubt, let me know.

Field observations must be presented in written form, should run between 15-20 pages, and you will present it in class (approximately 10 minutes). This is rolling a deadline, but the field observation must be completed and handed in by the final.

Final Paper

In the hope that this class will further your research, you can pursue one of two options for your class paper.

Option 1: Research Project

Students pursuing this option will conduct original political communication research during the course of the semester and write a paper based on it. The goal is that this could potentially become a journal article or a chapter of a thesis or dissertation. You may choose any methodological approach. Students pursuing this option should also complete the Collaborative IRB Certification training online (if necessary or you have not already) at: https://research.unc.edu/offices/human-research-ethics/researchers/training/index.htm. If you are planning on carrying this work outside of class, you should also complete an IRB proposal (I am happy to guide you in this).

Option 2: Your Choice

I am open to other approaches to the final paper given the diversity of student interest in the class. If you want to pursue a different project, submit your plan in writing.

For both options, you will present your preliminary work midway through the semester and deliver a 15 minute presentation of your final paper to the class during the scheduled final exam period. The completed final project will be assessed based on the a) conceptualization of the project, b) its contribution, or potential contribution, to the literature, c) the fit between theory and method, d) execution of the project, and e) clarity in writing.

Special Accommodations:

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at https://accessibility.unc.edu/

Honor Code:

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (http://honor.unc.edu). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Seeking Help:

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

Diversity:

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Laptops

You are free to use laptops or tablets for note taking purposes, or to access electronic readings. Otherwise, I ask that your devices be off the internet during class.

Course Schedule

Monday, January 13th

Beaulieu, Emily, Amber E. Boydstun, Nadia E. Brown, Kim Yi Dionne, Andra Gillespie, Samara Klar, Yanna Krupnikov, Melissa R. Michelson, Kathleen Searles, and Christina Wolbrecht. "Women also know stuff: Meta-level mentoring to battle gender bias in political science." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50, no. 3 (2017): 779-783.

Chadwick, Andrew. "The New Crisis of Public Communication: Challenges and Opportunities for Future Research on Digital Media and Politics." Available online at: **https://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/online-civic-culture-centre/news-events/articles/o3c-2-crisis/**

Chakravartty, Paula, Rachel Kuo, Victoria Grubbs, and Charlton McIlwain. "#CommunicationSoWhite." *Journal of Communication* 68, no. 2 (2018): 254-266.

Monday, January 20th

No Class, Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

Part One: Democracy

Monday, January 27th

Schudson, Michael. *The good citizen: A history of American civic life*. New York: Martin Kessler Books, 1998.

Smith, Rogers M. "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: the multiple traditions in America." *American political science review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 549-566.

Mason, Lilliana. *Uncivil agreement: How politics became our identity*. University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Monday, February 3rd

No Class because of the Iowa Caucuses – we will reschedule this during Dannagal Young's visit to meet with her. For this meeting, read:

Young, Dannagal Goldthwaite. *Irony and Outrage: The Polarized Landscape of Rage, Fear, and Laughter in the United States*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2019.

Monday, February 10th

Jurgen Habermas (1991). "The Public Sphere." In Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds. Rethinking Popular Culture. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy." *Social text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. "The societalization of social problems: Church pedophilia, phone hacking, and the financial crisis." *American Sociological Review* 83, no. 6 (2018): 1049-1078.

Rosenblum, Nancy L. "Partisanship and independence: the peculiar moralism of American politics." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 17, no. 3 (2014): 267-288.

Mast, Jason L., and Jeffrey C. Alexander, eds. *Politics of Meaning/Meaning of Politics: Cultural Sociology of the 2016 US Presidential Election*. Springer, 2018. Available online at: https://link.springer.com/journal/41290/5/3 *Read selected chapters emailed in advance of class*

Shah, Dhavan V., Douglas M. McLeod, Hernando Rojas, Jaeho Cho, Michael W. Wagner, and Lewis A. Friedland. "Revising the communication mediation model for a new political communication ecology." *Human Communication Research* 43, no. 4 (2017): 491-504.

Part Two: Social Identity

Monday, February 17th

Abrajano, Marisa, and Zoltan L. Hajnal. *White backlash: immigration, race, and American politics*. Princeton University Press, 2017. *Read the introduction*

Achen, Christopher, and Larry Bartels. "Democracy for realists: Holding up a mirror to the electorate." *Juncture* 22, no. 4 (2016): 269-275.

Comello, M. L. G. (2009). William James on "possible selves": Implications for studying identity in communication contexts. *Communication Theory*, 19(3), 337-350.

Cooper, Brittney. "Intersectionality." In *The Oxford handbook of feminist theory*. 2016.

Harris-Lacewell, Melissa V. "Political science and the study of African American public opinion." *African American perspectives on political science* (2007): 107-129.

Kreiss, Daniel. "The networked self in the age of identity fundamentalism." In *A networked self and platforms, stories, connections*, pp. 12-28. Routledge, 2018.

Lane, Daniel S., Slgi S. Lee, Fan Liang, Dam Hee Kim, Liwei Shen, Brian E. Weeks, and Nojin Kwak. "Social Media Expression and the Political Self." *Journal of Communication* 69, no. 1 (2019): 49-72.

Walsh, Katherine Cramer. "Putting inequality in its place: Rural consciousness and the power of perspective." *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 3 (2012): 517-532.

Monday, March 2nd

Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. "Affect, not ideology, a social identity perspective on polarization." *Public opinion quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2012): 405-431.

Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, and Sean J. Westwood. "The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (2019): 129-146.

Kreiss, D., R. Lawrence, and S. McGregor. (In press). "Political Identity-Ownership: Symbolic Contests to Represent Members of the Public." Special issue of *Social Media & Society*.

Lelkes, Yphtach, and Sean J. Westwood. "The limits of partisan prejudice." *The Journal of Politics* 79, no. 2 (2017): 485-501.

Lelkes, Yphtach, and Paul M. Sniderman. "The ideological asymmetry of the American party system." *British Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 4 (2016): 825-844.

Stroud, Natalie Jomini. "Polarization and partisan selective exposure." *Journal of communication* 60, no. 3 (2010): 556-576.

Valentino, Nicholas A., Stuart N. Soroka, Shanto Iyengar, Toril Aalberg, Raymond Duch, Marta Fraile, Kyu S. Hahn et al. "Economic and cultural drivers of immigrant support worldwide." *British Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 4 (2019): 1201-1226.

Van Duyn, Emily. "Hidden democracy: Political dissent in rural America." *Journal of Communication* 68, no. 5 (2018): 965-987.

Monday, February 24th

Peck, Reece. *Fox Populism: Branding Conservatism as Working Class*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Monday, March 9th

No Class, Spring Break

Part Three: Epistemology

Monday, March 16th

Faris, Robert, Hal Roberts, Bruce Etling, Nikki Bourassa, Ethan Zuckerman, and Yochai Benkler. "Partisanship, propaganda, and disinformation: Online media and the 2016 US presidential election." *Berkman Klein Center Research Publication* 6 (2017).

Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. "The minimal persuasive effects of campaign contact in general elections: Evidence from 49 field experiments." *American Political Science Review* 112, no. 1 (2018): 148-166.

Kim, Young Mie, Jordan Hsu, David Neiman, Colin Kou, Levi Bankston, Soo Yun Kim, Richard Heinrich, Robyn Baragwanath, and Garvesh Raskutti. "The stealth media? Groups and targets behind divisive issue campaigns on Facebook." *Political Communication* 35, no. 4 (2018): 515-541.

Cramer, Katherine J., and Benjamin Toff. "The fact of experience: Rethinking political knowledge and civic competence." *Perspectives on Politics* 15, no. 3 (2017): 754-770.

Ladd, Jonathan M. *Why Americans hate the news media and how it matters*. Princeton University Press, 2012. *Read selections emailed in advance of class*

Lelkes, Yphtach. "Winners, losers, and the press: the relationship between political parallelism and the legitimacy gap." *Political Communication* 33, no. 4 (2016): 523-543.

Wells, Chris, Katherine J. Cramer, Michael W. Wagner, German Alvarez, Lewis A. Friedland, Dhavan V. Shah, Leticia Bode, Stephanie Edgerly, Itay Gabay, and Charles Franklin. "When we stop talking politics: The maintenance and closing of conversation in contentious times." *Journal of Communication* 67, no. 1 (2017): 131-157.

Monday, March 23th

Bail, Christopher A., Brian Guay, Emily Maloney, Aidan Combs, D. Sunshine Hillygus, Friedolin Merhout, Deen Freelon, and Alexander Volfovsky. "Assessing the Russian Internet Research Agency's impact on the political attitudes and behaviors of American Twitter users in late 2017." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2019).

Bode, Leticia, and Emily K. Vraga. "In related news, that was wrong: The correction of misinformation through related stories functionality in social media." *Journal of Communication* 65, no. 4 (2015): 619-638.

Southwell, Brian G., and Emily A. Thorson. "The prevalence, consequence, and remedy of misinformation in mass media systems." (2015): 589-595.

Thorson, Emily. "Belief echoes: The persistent effects of corrected misinformation." *Political Communication* 33, no. 3 (2016): 460-480.

Lazer, David MJ, Matthew A. Baum, Yochai Benkler, Adam J. Berinsky, Kelly M. Greenhill, Filippo Menczer, Miriam J. Metzger et al. "The science of fake news." *Science* 359, no. 6380 (2018): 1094-1096.

Tucker, Joshua A., Andrew Guess, Pablo Barberá, Cristian Vaccari, Alexandra Siegel, Sergey Sanovich, Denis Stukal, and Brendan Nyhan. "Social media, political polarization, and political disinformation: A review of the scientific literature." *Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation: A Review of the Scientific Literature (March 19, 2018)* (2018).

Weeks, Brian E. "Emotions, partisanship, and misperceptions: How anger and anxiety moderate the effect of partisan bias on susceptibility to political misinformation." *Journal of Communication* 65, no. 4 (2015): 699-719.

Part Four: Technology and Media

Monday, March 30th

Chadwick, Andrew. *The hybrid media system*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Wells, Chris, Dhavan V. Shah, Jon C. Pevehouse, JungHwan Yang, Ayellet Pelled, Frederick Boehm, Josephine Lukito, Shreenita Ghosh, and Jessica L. Schmidt. "How Trump drove coverage to the nomination: Hybrid media campaigning." *Political Communication* 33, no. 4 (2016): 669-676.

Monday, April 6th

Bennett, W. Lance, and Shanto Iyengar. "A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication." *Journal of communication* 58, no. 4 (2008): 707-731.

Bode, Leticia, Emily K. Vraga, Porismita Borah, and Dhavan V. Shah. "A new space for political behavior: Political social networking and its democratic consequences." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 19, no. 3 (2014): 414-429.

Bode, Leticia, Stephanie Edgerly, Chris Wells, Itay Gabay, Charles Franklin, Lew Friedland, and Dhavan V. Shah. "Participation in Contentious Politics: Rethinking the Roles of News, Social Media, and Conversation Amid Divisiveness." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 15, no. 3 (2018): 215-229.

Boydstun, Amber E., Anne Hardy, and Stefaan Walgrave. "Two faces of media attention: Media storm versus non-storm coverage." *Political Communication* 31, no. 4 (2014): 509-531.

Chakravartty, Paula, and Srirupa Roy. "Media pluralism redux: Towards new frameworks of comparative media studies "beyond the West"." *Political Communication* 30, no. 3 (2013): 349-370.

Monday, April 13th

Bossetta, Michael. "The digital architectures of social media: Comparing political campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat in the 2016 US election." *Journalism & mass communication quarterly* 95, no. 2 (2018): 471-496.

Gil de Zúñiga, Homero, Brian Weeks, and Alberto Ardèvol-Abreu. "Effects of the news-finds-me perception in communication: Social media use implications for news seeking and learning about politics." *Journal of computer-mediated communication* 22, no. 3 (2017): 105-123.

Freelon, Deen. "Discourse architecture, ideology, and democratic norms in online political discussion." *New media & society* 17, no. 5 (2015): 772-791.

Kreiss, Daniel. *Prototype politics: Technology-intensive campaigning and the data of democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2016. Read chapters one and seven.

Kreiss, Daniel, and Kirsten Adams. "Navigating the brogrammers and the boys' club: Women's representation and experiences in political technology." *New Media & Society* (2019): 1461444819835573.

Jackson, Sarah J. "(Re) imagining intersectional democracy from Black feminism to hashtag activism." *Women's Studies in Communication* 39, no. 4 (2016): 375-379.

Jackson, Sarah J., and Brooke Foucault Welles. "Hijacking# myNYPD: Social media dissent and networked counterpublics." *Journal of Communication* 65, no. 6 (2015): 932-952.

Vaccari, Cristian, Andrew Chadwick, and Ben O'Loughlin. "Dual screening the political: Media events, social media, and citizen engagement." *Journal of Communication* 65, no. 6 (2015): 1041-1061.

Monday, April 20th

Freelon, Deen, and David Karpf. "Of big birds and bayonets: Hybrid Twitter interactivity in the 2012 presidential debates." *Information, Communication & Society* 18, no. 4 (2015): 390-406.

Klinger, Ulrike, and Jakob Svensson. "The emergence of network media logic in political communication: A theoretical approach." *New media & society* 17, no. 8 (2015): 1241-1257.

Kreiss, Daniel, and Shannon C. McGregor. "Technology firms shape political communication: The work of Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter, and Google with campaigns during the 2016 US presidential cycle." *Political Communication* 35, no. 2 (2018): 155-177.

Lawrence, Regina G., and Amber E. Boydstun. "What we should really be asking about media attention to Trump." *Political Communication* 34, no. 1 (2017): 150-153.

Lelkes, Yphtach, Gaurav Sood, and Shanto Iyengar. "The hostile audience: The effect of access to broadband internet on partisan affect." *American Journal of Political Science* 61, no. 1 (2017): 5-20.

McGregor, Shannon C., Regina G. Lawrence, and Arielle Cardona. "Personalization, gender, and social media: gubernatorial candidates' social media strategies." *Information, Communication & Society* 20, no. 2 (2017): 264-283.

Noble, Safiya Umoja. "Google search: Hyper-visibility as a means of rendering black women and girls invisible." *InVisible Culture* 19 (2013).

Shin, Jieun, and Kjerstin Thorson. "Partisan selective sharing: The biased diffusion of fact-checking messages on social media." *Journal of Communication* 67, no. 2 (2017): 233-255.

Stroud, Natalie Jomini, and Ashley Muddiman. "Social Media Engagement With Strategy-and Issue-Framed Political News." *Journal of Communication* 69, no. 5 (2019): 443-466.

Final Exam:

Mon. May 4 at 8:00am