Elective module on new developments in political communication (“Wahlpflichtmodul”)

“It is an extraordinary era in which we live. It is altogether new. The world has seen nothing like it before.”

(U.S. Senator Daniel Webster, 1847)

Instructor: Rasmus Kleis Nielsen
Seminars: Wednesdays, 2pm-6pm (triweekly)
Office hours: Tuesdays, 3pm-4pm

Overview

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to some of the most current academic research on new developments in political communication, including, amongst other things, the emergence of a new “political information cycle” across analogue and digital media platforms, the development of increasingly specialized technologies for targeting news media and voter contacts, and a renewed focus on mobilization and “structured interactivity” in political parties, interest groups, and media organizations. The course will introduce students to the theoretical and methodological tools necessary to understand these trends and discuss differences and similarities in how political communication is developing in different contexts, and thus equip them to better understand a changing media environment and political environment for professional and/or academic purposes.

The course

The course is about the future of political communication and political communication research, not the past or the present. It represents a selective engagement with some of the key trends shaping the field today and original works that help us understand political communication in new ways.

After a first seminar framing the course, we proceed to meet on a tri-weekly basis to analyze and discuss a recent book on a central question in political communication. The seminars are tri-weekly to ensure participants have time to read whole books for each session.

All students will be assigned to do a short in-class presentation about one of the books we read in one of the seminars. Before each seminar, participants are expected to email the instructor a short memo of no more than 350 words outlining key take-aways from the book and questions raised by it. At the end of the course, each student will be asked to select one of the books covered in the course and write a full-length critical book review (up to 2,000 words maximum), summarizing the main argument, the evidence it is based on, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses, and discussing its wider relevance for understanding political communication today. Students will be graded on the basis of their participation in discussion in the seminars (including their presentations) and their final book review.

Recommended reading

Each of the four main seminars focus on one book, with several related works listed under “recommended readings”. This course is unapologetically about big ideas that require a big canvas, so the focus is on books.
Seminar 1 (04.15.2015) What are the challenges facing political communication today?

Required reading


Recommended reading


Seminar 2 (05.06.2015) How does politics and power work in contemporary hybrid media systems?

Required reading


Recommended readings


Seminar 3 (05.27.2015) How do collective and connective action interact?

Required reading

Recommended readings


Seminar 4 (06.17.2015) How do citizens experience politics?

Required reading


Recommended readings


Seminar 5 (07.08.2015) How do algorithms shape political life?

Required reading


Recommended readings

