

## **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

Bennett, W. L., & Iyengar, S. 2008. A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58, 707-731.

### Recommended reading

- Castells, M. 2007. Communication, power and counter-power in the network society, *International Journal of Communication*, 1, 238-266.
- Holbert, R.L., Garrett, R.K., & Gleason 2010. A new era of minimal effects? A response to Bennett and Iyengar. *Journal of Communication*, 60, 15-34.
- Bennett, W. L. & Iyengar, S. 2010. The shifting foundations of political communication: Responding to a defense of the media effects paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 60, 35-39.
- Jensen, K. & Neuman, W.R. 2013. Evolving paradigms of communication research. *International Journal of Communication*, 7, 230-238.
- Barnhurst, Kevin G. 2011. The New "Media Affect" and the Crisis of Representation for Political Communication. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 16 (4): 573-93.

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

### Required reading

Chadwick, Andrew. 2013. *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### Recommended readings

- Bimber, Bruce A. 2003. *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 2000. *The Rise of the Network Society*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Cook, Timothy E. 1998. *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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

### Required reading

Bennett, W. Lance, and Alexandra Segerberg. 2013. *The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### Recommended readings

- Bimber, Bruce A., Andrew J. Flanagin, and Cynthia Stohl. 2012. *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*. Communication, Society and Politics. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Karpf, David. 2012. *The MoveOn Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kreiss, Daniel. 2012. *Taking Our Country Back: The Crafting of Networked Politics from Howard Dean to Barack Obama*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### **Seminar 4 (06.17.2015) How do citizens experience politics?**

#### Required reading

- Coleman, Stephen. 2012. *How Voters Feel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

#### Recommended readings

- Eliasoph, Nina. 1998. *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press.
- Gamson, William A. 1992. *Talking Politics*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press.
- Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2004. *Talking About Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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

#### Required reading

- Pasquale, Frank. 2015. *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

#### Recommended readings

- Hindman, Matthew Scott. 2008. *The Myth of Digital Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pariser, Eli. 2011. *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*. London: Viking.
- Turow, Joseph. 2011. *The Daily You: How the New Advertising Industry Is Defining Your Identity and Your Worth*. New Haven, Conn; London: Yale University Press.