

Journalism and Politics in the Digital Age Summer 2016

MTTRF 2:00pm – 4:30pm

Location: LL104 Diana

Instructor: Burcu Baykurt

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Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Description

Digital technology is challenging and changing established journalistic and political institutions on a number of fronts, from the increasing use of data in journalism to the movements such as “Occupy” and the “Arab Spring” to the recent Snowden leaks. This course will explore the digital transformations in journalism and politics along with the consequences of our widespread use of the Internet. What constitutes journalism in an era when anyone with a phone camera and Internet connection can engage in those acts? What level of political knowledge and participation should we expect of citizens, and how do digital media facilitate those levels?

Course Materials

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, we will use of a variety of scholarly articles, research reports, and primary sources (including audio-visual material and media texts) to understand and assess the themes, issues and theoretical debates central to the study of digital journalism and politics.

Evaluation

- In-Class Presentations (20%)
- Reporting Assignment (25%)
- Final Presentation (15%)
- Final Assignment (40%)

Attendance

Attendance is important. Out of respect for each other, please arrive to class on time. Notify me in advance about a planned absence, and as soon as possible in the case of exceptional circumstances (illness, family emergency, etc.).

In- Class Presentations (20% of final grade)

You will be asked to deliver a brief (5-7 minute) individual presentation once during our course. Think of this presentation as a “show-and-tell” inspired by the week’s readings. Your goal is to:

a) Summarize the THESIS of the day’s reading. In other words, what is the most important thing this reading can teach us? Write it out in no more than three sentences in your own words. You do not need to summarize the whole reading. Assume everyone has read it and is ready to talk about it!

b) Bring in one MEDIA EXAMPLE that exemplifies, illustrates, problematizes, or otherwise speaks to the article’s thesis. For example, you could bring in a current news article, a clip from a documentary, an object from an archive, a photograph, a YouTube video, a work of art, an

exhibition, an advertisement, a book, a website, an audio clip, etc. Use your media object to help unpack the reading and to spark an interesting discussion with your peers.

c) Bring at least TWO QUESTIONS about your reading/object, and use these to ignite our discussion. Your job is not to lecture. Instead, your job is to start a compelling discussion, and help guide it throughout the class. Questions might address concepts you found confusing, provocative passages in the readings, or problems you have with the author's arguments. You could ask how a particular reading relates or compares with another reading from the class syllabus.

Reporting Assignment

At the heart of this course lies the role of (digital) media in producing or facilitating political change. Each of you will select an ongoing political or social issue in which certain activist groups intervene (activism broadly defined as electoral campaigns, grassroots campaigns or the branding strategies of corporations) and cover it throughout the course. For the first assignment, report and write a brief journalistic piece (no more than 500 words) related to the issue you pick and the activist intervention around it. Explain what the activist group wants to achieve politically and how they use (digital) media to meet their goals. Who are the activists? What do they want to change? What solutions do they propose? What strategies do they use to reach their goals? How do they use the media to achieve their goals? How do journalists cover this group and their campaign?

Final Assignment

You have considerable freedom to decide the topic of your final project (e.g., you might choose to expand on your reporting assignment), but I ask you to choose one of the following formats:

1. A traditional "deep analysis" (1,000-1,500 words) in which you closely analyze, compare, and synthesize at least 2 of the theoretical readings on a topic of your choice;
2. A media evaluation (1,000-1,500 words) in which you apply at least 2 of the readings to an existing digital media outlet, using the readings to analyze its format, content and structure, and suggest ways that it might be changed in light of the readings.
3. A media design in which you prototype a new media outlet (we can discuss different approaches) and write a paper (1,000-1,500 words) on how your prototype at least 2 of the readings.

June 28: Pitch an idea to cover for this class (100 words).

July 2: Submit your story (no more than 500 words)

July 9: Please bring a short description of which two readings from our course you will use in your essay and any preliminary analysis you have done. We will spend some time discussing these proposals in class.

July 17: Final paper and in-class presentation (no more than 1000 words)

Field trips

When we take field trips to newsrooms, we will travel together from Barnard, and you will be expected to pay for your own subway fare. If you don't plan on coming back to campus immediately after the trip you must sign out with the R.I on duty in advance, and notify me as well.

Laptop Policy

I discourage the use of laptops, tablets, phones, and other electronic devices in class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday 6/27 – Setting Our Course

Michael Schudson. 2008. [News and Democratic Society: Past, Present, and Future.](#)

Tuesday 6/28 – What’s the Public? What is the Role of Journalism in Public Life?

-Jurgen Habermas. 1964. [The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article.](#)

-Michael Schudson. 1995. “[Was There Ever a Public Sphere?](#)” in *Power of News*.

Thursday 6/30 – Photojournalism and Foreign Reporting

-Guest lecture: Joscelyn Jurich (Columbia University)

-Sontag, Susan. "Photography: A Little Summa"

<https://mrsunshine87.wordpress.com/2012/01/13/photography-a-little-summa-by-susan-sontag/>

-Carrie A. Rentschler. 2004. Witnessing: US citizenship and the vicarious experience of suffering.

-Before coming to class, please watch the six short video clips below and jot down your reactions to each discussion and the photograph(s) discussed BEFORE doing the readings

- then after you read, you can add any other ideas that comes to mind: "The BagNewsSalon at Photoville 2014: The Most Significant News Photos of the Year"

<http://www.bagnewsnotes.com/2014/09/the-bagnewssalon-photoville-2014-reading-the-key-news-pictures-of-the-year/>

Friday 7/1 – Political Economy of News

-Field trip: ProPublica

-Edwin Baker. 2002. Not Toasters: The Special Nature of Media Products.

-Robert W. McChesney, 2012. Digital Disconnect. New York: The New Press.

Monday 7/4 – No class: Happy 4th of July.

Tuesday 7/5 – Race and Gender in the Media and Politics

-Stuart Hall. 1995. The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and Media.

-Regina Lawrence and Melody Rose. 2010. Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House.

Thursday 7/7 – Covering Politics in the Field

-Joan Didion.1988. Insider Baseball.

-Jack Shafer. 2012. Presidential campaigns, sports writing, and the fine art of pretending.

Friday 7/8 – Field trip to ProPublica.

Monday 7/11 – What’s Networked News?

- Andrew Chadwick. 2013. Power, Interdependence, and Hybridity in the Construction of Political News: Understanding Wikileaks
- Alan Rusbridger. 2010. [Ten Lessons for Open Journalism from the Guardian](#).

Tuesday 7/12 – Networked Protests and Digital Activism

- Zeynep Tufekci. 2014. Social Movements and Governments in the Digital Age: Evaluating a Complex Landscape
- Yasmine El Rashidi. 2011. The Battle for Egypt’s Future.

Thursday 7/14 – Does the Internet Have Its Own Politics?

- Gabriella Coleman. 2012. Hacker Politics and Publics.
- Gabriella Coleman. 2013. Geeks are the New Guardians of Our Civil Liberties.
- James McGirk. 2012. Google On The L Train: Sci-fi, Wifi And The MTA.

Friday 7/15 – Immersion methods in research and journalism

- Mitchell Duneier. 1999. Sidewalk. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Nellie Bly. 1887. Ten Days in a Mad-House. (First 4 chapters).

Monday 7/18 – Field trip to Democracy Now!**Tuesday 7/19 – Free Speech/Privacy v. Surveillance**

- Geoffrey King. 2014. [The NSA Puts Journalists Under a Cloud of Suspicion](#). *The Committee to Protect Journalists*.
- Laura Poitras and Kate Crawford. 2015. [Divorce Your Metadata](#).

Thursday 7/21 – Final presentations and closing thoughts