



## **POLITICS AND DIGITAL MEDIA AFTER DEMOCRACY WHAT?**

**Advanced Topics/COMM 594**

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### **Course description**

This course operates on the premise that everything that involves a choice is political and everything that involves doing is mediated. With this in mind, we read works that explicate the political and the mediated. Our objective is to enrich our understanding of the place of technology in contemporary political environments, democratic and non. The past few decades have seen the rise of publics that are increasingly skeptical, cynical, and disillusioned with democracy in its present form; a system that is idealized, but that is also old, encourages compromise, and does not always inherently afford paths to inclusion. And so the question that we return to, throughout this course is: After Democracy, What? We read from a variety of sources, including books, articles and the popular press, and whenever possible we invite the authors to discuss their texts with us in class via Skype.

### **Course Objectives**

- To survey theory and research on politics and digital media.
- To develop a point of view on the place of technology in politics and society.
- To run a study and produce a research paper submitted to a conference and scholarly journal.
- To learn how to promote your own work.
- To figure out your own identity as scholars and how to articulate that identity

### **Reading materials**

Readings will be available online, through the blackboard site for the course, and may also be obtained via online vendors. All registered students have been registered to the blackboard site by default.

### **Requirements**

Grades for the course will be based on in-class performance, a short media commentary/essay, a book review, a research paper, and a research presentation.

### **Media Commentary/Essay**

This assignment requires binge watching with your media scholar hats on. You will select one of the following series, which comment, among other things, on the everyday reality of politics. Here are your options: Borgen, The Honourable Woman, House of Cards, Occupied, or Deutschland 83. You will then write a single page, single spaced think piece critique of the show, focusing on how politics is portrayed on TV, and theorizing on the impact of these portrayals. The tone must be scholarly and relatable to our class. This is supposed to be fun. So, be imaginative, creative, but also, don't forget that you are media scholars and social scientists. So, no colloquialisms. This is supposed to be engaging and bite-sized scholarship for public consumption.

**15% of your grade, due February 17**

### **Book Review**

You will complete a review of a book of your choosing. The book must have been published in 2015, 2016, or 2017, be relevant to the class, and approved by me. The book review itself will consist of two parts:

1) A single page, single spaced review of the book, where you sum up the book in one paragraph, and spend the rest of the time discussing and critiquing the issues it raises. Do NOT spend most of the book review summarizing the book – that is an automatic fail.

2) You will seek out the author(s) of the book, and do a short interview with them. You will ask them no more than three questions, over email. That will be the second page of your review. You may also interview them live and submit the interview in the form of a podcast. Your reviews may be submitted for consideration to the open access journal *Social Media and Society*, where they will be vetted for publication, and provided they meet our criteria, published. The book review will be due March 17, right before spring break. I advise you get started as soon as possible, as authors may be difficult to contact. I ask that you run the books by me, so that I can help with contacting the authors, if needed.

**your grade, due March 17**

**15% of**

**Research Project** – to be completed in five parts

**1. Research Proposal**

You will formulate a research question, review the relevant theory and research, and propose a study that investigates this question. No more than 250 words, excluding references. You will submit this to me and to a conference in your field of study.

**DUE MARCH 3**

**2. Literature Review:**

Flesh out your proposal into the first part of your research paper, including your introduction, literature review, and leading into your research question(s).

**3. Method/Analysis:**

Detail your method and research design.

**DRAFT DUE APRIL 3**

**4. Results and Discussion – Themes/Discussion:**

Write a description of the results and conclusions of the study.

**5. Paper Presentations:**

Create a PowerPoint and/or multimedia summary of your work and present to the class, during the last class meetings. Presentations will be followed by question and answer sessions.

Drafts are not graded. They are turned in so that I can offer advice and help make the papers better. Only the final version of the paper and your presentation will be graded, although you will get direct feedback on your progress throughout the semester. For your presentation, you must specify conference presentation, publication and promotion plans for your work. Late submissions are not accepted and incompletes not granted. Pick your projects wisely, so that they are executable within the timeframe of a semester.

**for presentation, due April 24**

**40% for final version, 10%**

**Participation**

Your attendance and participation to class discussions is essential and expected. This is a graduate seminar, meant to inform you on this topic but to also teach you to articulate your own opinions with confidence. All readings should be completed before the assigned date, and you should come to class prepared to talk. Each week, I expect that you highlight 3-5 paragraphs/pages/sentences from the readings that you found interesting, and come prepared to talk. I also expect that you will follow news and public affairs closely, and come to class with one item from the popular press that touches on the topic we discuss that week or in the class in general.

**Worth 20% of your grade**

**Special Needs**

It is our desire that all students participate fully in the curriculum of our department. If you have a disability or special condition that compromises your ability to successfully participate in this class, please notify me as soon as possible and make sure you register with the appropriate University office. All efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.

**Honor Code**

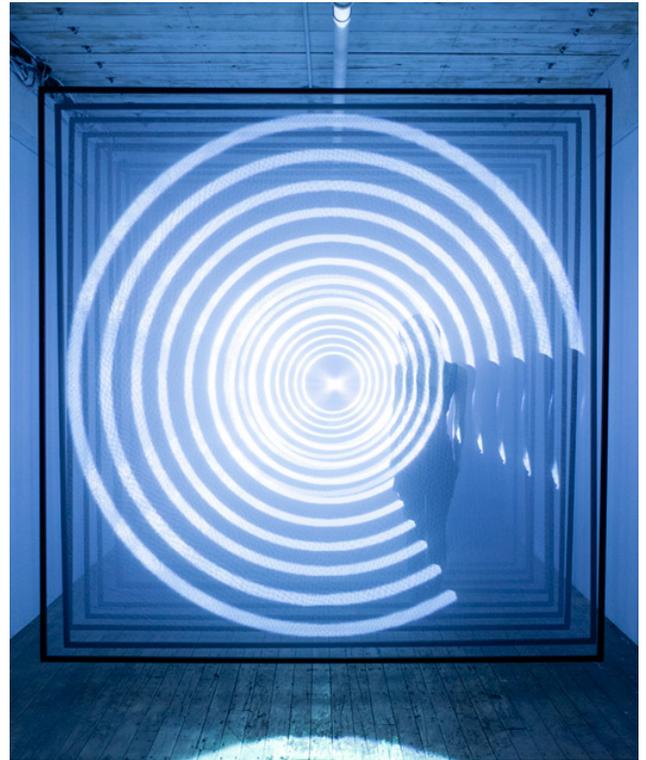
All students are expected to read and observe the UIC Honor Code Policy concerning academic integrity.

**Plagiarizing**

When facts or other material are obtained from an outside source, that source should be cited properly in the text and the bibliography/references section of your work. Plagiarism is defined as taking the words or ideas of another person and presenting them as one's own without proper credit. Plagiarizing is considered cheating, and a student who plagiarizes will receive a zero for that assignment and/or a failing grade for the course. If you are not certain that you are citing materials properly, feel free to double check your citations with me.

**Security and Safety**

Please make sure that you download the UIC app and read the guidelines on campus security and safety carefully.



## COURSE SCHEDULE

Reading assignments should be completed prior to the date for which they are assigned. You should come to class prepared to discuss what you have read. This schedule is tentative – you will be advised of changes. The syllabus contains active links to purchasing ebooks online, and live links to articles available free of cost. All other readings will be available via blackboard (BB).

Jan. 9	Course overview	Syllabus – <b>order books, watch shows, pre-read, gather popular press materials</b>
Jan. 16	MLK DAY	No class
Jan. 23	IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS . . .	Thomas More, Utopia (available for free on kindle and online)
Jan. 30	THE PRESS AND PERSONAL INFLUENCE	Schudson, Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press Katz & Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications
Feb. 6	THE PRESENT STATE I	Herbst, Numbered Voices Patterson, Out of Order Coleman, How Voters Feel
Feb. 13	THE PRESENT STATE II	Mouffe, The Democratic Paradox Laclau, Emancipations Browse: Laclau-On Populist Reason (excerpts will be available on pdf) <b>MEDIA COMMENTARY/ESSAY DUE FEB 17</b>
Feb. 20	CONTEMPORARY INSECURITIES	Beck, World Risk Society Rojecki, America and the Politics of Insecurity (pdf to be posted)
Feb. 27	CONTEMPORARY CULTURES OF PARTICIPATION	Jenkins et al., By Any Media Necessary Papacharissi, A Private Sphere (PDF will be available) Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, Misunderstanding the Internet (pdf to be posted)  <b>RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE MARCH 3</b>
Mar. 6	HYBRID CULTURES, COLLAPSED BOUNDARIES	Kreiss - Prototype Politics McKelvey, Langlois & Elmer -The Permanent Campaign Chadwick, The Hybrid Media System

Mar. 13	CONNECTION, DISCONNECTION AND SPECTATORSHIP	Bennett and Segerberg, The Logic of Connective Action (article) Papacharissi, Affective Publics (article) Lacey, Listening Publics Active Spectatorship – Dan Kreiss et al
<b>BOOK REVIEW DUE MARCH 17</b>		

March 20-24 Spring Break

Mar. 27	IDENTITY, MARGINALIZATION, VOICE	Couldry, Why Voice Matters Howard et al, The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy
Apr. 3	DAY OFF	<b>FIRST PAPER DRAFT DUE APRIL 3</b>
Apr. 10	THE MEDIATED	Selection of Articles from A Companion to New Media Dynamics (pdf to be posted) Selection from Digital Keywords (pdf to be posted)
Apr. 17	THE POLITICAL	Fenton, Digital, Political, Radical Russell, Journalism as Activism (pdf to be posted)
Apr. 24	<b>Completed Research Papers, Work dissemination plan and Presentations due</b>	

