

**Department of Political Science and Public Administration**

**POS 345-01: Global Digital Activism**

**Fall 2015**

**TR 12:30-1:45**

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**Office Hours**: Wednesdays 1-4 p.m. or by appointment

**Course Description:**

What is digital activism? From the 2003-2004 Democratic primary campaign of Howard Dean, to the Black Lives Matter movement, groups and individuals have leveraged the capabilities of the Internet and social media to promote social and political change. But how successful have they been? How do digital media technologies transform journalism, collective action, and authoritarian political systems? One one side of this popular and academic debate, techno-enthusiasts like Clay Shirky trumpet the liberating potential of new media technologies, while skeptics like Malcolm Gladwell and Evgeny Morozov dismiss everything but grassroots organizing as ephemeral or even counterproductive, warning that governments and corporations are likely to use digital tools to enforce ever-greater social control. We begin by exploring the evolution of the American “blogosphere” and its role in the American media and political ecosystem. We will then explore the role of the Internet in collective action, authoritarian regimes, humanitarian work and vigilante justice, before turning to a consideration of the darker aspects of contemporary digital discourse and activism.

**Goals and Philosophy**

The course is not designed to give you a crash course in hacking or surveillance. It is designed, rather, to immerse you in the discourse surrounding digital activism, and to give you the **discipline-specific knowledge** and tools to participate in the conversation. The goal is, by the end of the class, for you to be able to give an informed answer to the question, “**Are digital media tools of social justice**?” This syllabus serves as an invitation for you to join the conversations that political scientists, communications scholars, and digital activists engage in with each other, with scholars from other disciplines, with policymakers, and with other groups and individuals in the world. This is not a lecture-only course. On the contrary, to help develop skills of **effective communication**, we will be engaging in a variety of collaborative and group activities in the classroom, designed to solve problems and offer answers to the toughest questions facing those who consider questions of politics and policy.

**Required Texts**

The following texts are available for purchase in the university bookstore.

1. Shirky, Clay. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*.
2. Meier, Patrick. *Digital Humanitarians*.
3. Sauter, Molly. *The Coming Swarm*.

*All other readings will be posted well in advance on Blackboard. Such readings are denoted by a* **{BB}** *in the syllabus.*

**Attendance and Punctuality**

There is no attendance policy for this course. Please do not come in late.

**Crisis Policy**

If you are experiencing difficulties with your health, personal life or any other crisis that is affecting your ability to come to class and complete the work, it is imperative that you alert me as soon as possible. The best path is to see someone at Roosevelt’s counseling center, who can then (with your permission) alert all your professors that you are having trouble. *It is not acceptable to approach me at the end of the semester to tell me you’ve been having problems since January with the expectation that this will change your grade.*

**Assignments**

*Midterm Examination:* There will be one midterm exam, administered in-class on March 5th. A make-up exam will only be given under dire circumstances and only after presentation of all appropriate documentation. Notification of dire circumstances *must be made before the exam is administered*.

*Position Papers:* Each student will write two 1,200-1,500 word position papers on specific questions as stated in the syllabus. Details for these assignments are posted to Blackboard and will be distributed in class well in advance of the first due date.

*Research Sequence:* Each student will write a 3,000-3,500 word term paper, addressing course themes about digital activism. The paper will be a 3-part research sequence, comprised of a research proposal (10%), complex synthesis (30%) and judgmental synthesis/final paper (60%). The detailed research sequence is posted to Blackboard for you to review. Relevant dates are included in the syllabus. Altogether the Sequence is worth 20% of your final grade.

*Presentations*: Each student will participate in two collaborative presentations over the course of the semester. Details of this assignment will be distributed on the second day of class.

*Final Exam*: There will be a final exam administered during the assigned course period.

**Written assignments are due on the assigned due dates and promptly at the times specified on the assignments. Late assignments will be penalized as follows:**

* 1 min – 12 hours past due: -5%
* 12 hours to 24 hours past due: -10%
* 24 hours to 36 hours past due: -20%
* 36 hours to 48 hours past due: -30%
* 48 hours past due: Assignments not accepted (zero credit earned)

**You are responsible for sending the correct file in the correct format**. Emails without attachments, or emails containing files other than Word documents, will be regarded as not fulfilling the assignment. You may not under any circumstances:

* Claim that you saved the email in draft form but simply forgot to send it
* Claim that you sent the email to the wrong address
* Claim that you wrote the paper but simply forgot to send it to me
* Claim that you emailed me but forgot to attach the assignment
* Claim that the Internet is down where you live
* Claim that your document was lost in a catastrophic computer crash
* Claim that your document was lost, stolen or otherwise corrupted
* Email me days later with a different file claiming the file you sent me the first time was the wrong one. If you send the wrong file, you MUST realize and rectify the error within the timeframe of the due date.

**Grading**

Position Paper #1 10%

Position Paper #2 15%

Midterm Examination: 15%

Presentation: 10%

Research Sequence: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

Participation: 5%

**The grading scale is as follows**. Grades will be rounded down below .5, and rounded up for .5-.9 – i.e. an 89.4 is an 89, but an 89.5 is a 90.

92.5 – 100% : A 86.5 – 89.4%: B+ 76.5 – 79.4%: C+ 66.5 – 69.4%: D+

89.5 – 92.4%: A- 82.5 – 86.4%: B 72.5 – 76.4%: C 59.5 – 66.4%: D

79.5 – 82.4%: B- 69.5 – 72.4%: C- 0 – 59.4%: F

**Academic** **dishonesty**: The university’s policies on issues such as plagiarism, recycling, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty can be found in the student handbook, which is available as a link here: <http://www.roosevelt.edu/CurrentStudents.aspx> . Additional guidelines for avoiding plagiarism are available here: <http://www.roosevelt.edu/Provost/Faculty/AcademicIntegrity.aspx>

**Disability**: Roosevelt University complies fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Details about ADA and Roosevelt’s policies and practices are found here: <http://www.roosevelt.edu/StudentSuccess/Disability/Discrimination.aspx> If you have a condition or disability that requires special arrangements, please alert your instructor or the Academic Success Center as soon as possible, certainly before any assignment or classroom activity that requires accommodation**.** The Academic Success Center is located in AUD 128 in Chicago, and the phone number is 312-341-3818. In Schaumburg, the office is in room 125, and the phone number is 847-619-7978.

**Withdrawal** **date**: The final date for an official withdrawal from this class (meaning a “W” would appear on your transcript) is **Tuesday, Oct. 27**. After that, if you want to withdraw, you’ll need to petition the registrar. Petitions are granted only for non-academic reasons after the deadline**.** If you receive financial aid, it’s best to check with your counselor to assure that aid isn’t affected by withdrawing from a class. The complete withdrawal policy is here, along with a link to the withdrawal deadlines for classes offered in shortened or online terms: <http://www.roosevelt.edu/Registrar/Registration/Drop.aspx>

**Religious holidays**: Please let your instructor know as soon as possible if you will miss class because you are observing a religious holiday. Roosevelt University policy requires written notification to to the instructor within the first two weeks of the term. Any work you miss because of a religious holiday can be made up. You can see the full policy here: <http://www.roosevelt.edu/Policies/ReligiousHolidays.aspx>

**Student Code of Conduct:** Students enrolled in the university are expected to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with the university’s function as an educational institution. <http://www.roosevelt.edu/StudentSuccess/Conduct.aspx>

**Title IX**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based and sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you should contact our office of Title IX compliance or visit the office in WB 1312. For more information about Title IX please visit <http://www.roosevelt.edu/About/Compliance/About.aspx>

**Writing Center**

Students who need additional assistance in writing should visit the Writing Center. Information about the center can be found at its website:

<http://www.roosevelt.edu/CAS/Programs/LIT/WritingCenter.aspx>

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1**

**Tuesday, August 25th**

Introductions, logistics, course plan.

**Thursday, August 27th**

Read: Henry Farrell and Daniel Drezner, “The Power and Politics of Blogs” *Public Choice* (2008): pp. 15-30. **{BB}**.

**Week 2: The Evolution of Blogging and the New Media Environment**

**Tuesday, September 1st**

Read: Selections from Scott Rosenberg’s *Say Everything*, pp. 132-268 **{BB}**.

**Thursday, September 3rd**

Read: Bruce Bimber, “Digital Media in the Obama Campaigns of 2008 and 2012: Adaptation to the Personalized Political Communication Environment.” *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* (2014). **{BB}**

**Week 3: The Internet and Collective Action**

**Tuesday, September 8th**

Read: Shirky 1-142. Mancur Olson, “The Logic of Collective Action,” pp. 1-22. **{BB}**

**Thursday, September 10th**

Bimber, Bruce, Flanagin, Andrew and Stohl, Cynthia. “Reconceptualizing Collective Action in the Contemporary Media Environment.” **{BB**}

**Presentations: BDS, Fossil Fuel Divestment**

**Week 4: Digital Activism in Authoritarian Countries**

**Tuesday, September 15th**

Read: Shirky, 143-232. David Faris and Patrick Meier, “Digital Activism in Authoritarian Countries” From the *Routledge Handbook of Participatory Culture* **{BB}**.

**Thursday, September 17th**

Ethan Zuckerman, “[The Cute Cat Theory of Digital Activism](http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2008/03/08/the-cute-cat-theory-talk-at-etech/)” **{BB}.**

**Presentations: Myanmar monk uprising**

**Due 9/18 at 9 a.m.: Position Paper #1**

**Week 5: The Internet and the Arab Spring**

**Tuesday, September 22nd**

**Read:** Faris, David. “We Are All Revolutionaries Now” from *Dissent and Revolution in a Digital Age: Social Media, Blogging and Activism in Egypt*. pp. 146-178. **{BB}.** Gadi Wolfsfeld, “Social Media and the Arab Spring: Politics Comes First.” *International Journal of Press/Politics*. **{BB}**.

**Thursday, September 24th**

Read: Selections from Evgeny Morozov’s The Net Delusion. **{BB}**

**Presentations: Bahrain Uprising, Syrian Electronic Army**

**Week 6: Hashtag Activism and Twitter**

**Tuesday, September 29th**

Read: Marco Bastos, et. al. “Tents, Tweets and Events: The Interplay Between Ongoing Protests and Social Media.” *Journal of Communication*. (2015). **{BB}**

**Thursday, October 1st**

Read: Malcolm Gladwell, “Small Change.” *The New Yorker*, October 2010. **{BB}** Ben Brandzel, “[What Malcolm Gladwell Missed About Online Organizing and Creating BigChange.](http://www.thenation.com/article/what-malcolm-gladwell-missed-about-online-organizing-and-creating-big-change/)” *The Nation*. **{BB}**

**Presentations: Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street**

**Week 7: The Internet and Political Participation**

**Tuesday, October 6th**

Read: Jessica Vitak, et. al. “It’s Complicated: Facebook Users’ Political Participation in the 2008 Election.” *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* (2011). **{BB}**

**Thursday, October 8th**

Read: Bruce Bimber et. al. , “Digital Media and Political Participation: The Moderating Role of Political Interest Across Acts and Over Time.” *Social Science Computer Review* (2015). **{BB}**

**Week 8: Midterm**

**Tuesday, October 13th**

**In-class: Midterm**

**Week 9: Emerging Technologies: Crisis Mapping**

**Tuesday, October 20th**

Read: Meier chapters 1-3.

**Thursday, October 22nd**

Patrick Meier, “New Information Technologies and their Impact on the Humanitarian Sector.” *International Review of the Red Cross*, December 2011. **{BB}**.

**Presentations: Haiti Earthquake, Japan tsunami**

**Due 10/23 at 9 a.m.: Research Sequence Part 1**

**Week 10: Digital Humanitarianism pt. 2**

**Tuesday, October 27th**

Read: Meier, chapters 3-6

**Thursday, October 29th**

Read: Meier chapters 7-9

**Week 11: Hacktivisim**

**Tuesday, November 3rd**

**Read: Sauter, pp. 1-76**

**Thursday, November 5th**

**Read: Sauter pp. 77-139**

**Presentations: Wikileaks**

**Week 12: Activism or Harassment?**

**Tuesday, November 10th**

Read: Jon Ronson, “[How One Stupid Tweet Blew Up Justine Sacco’s Life](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/15/magazine/how-one-stupid-tweet-ruined-justine-saccos-life.html).” *New York Times Magazine*, February 12th, 2015.

**Thursday, November 12th**

Read: Rhiannon Williams, “[The Depressing Rise of the Moral Hacker](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11753178/Ashley-Madison-hack-The-depressing-rise-of-the-moral-hacker.html).”

**Presentations: Lindsey Stone, Ashley Madison**

**Due 11/13 at 9 a.m.: Research Sequence Part II**

**Week 13: The Dark Side of the Internet**

Tuesday, November 17th

Read: Adrienne Shaw, “The Internet is Full of Jerks Because the World is Full of Jerks: What Feminist Theory Teaches Us About the Internet.” **{BB}**

**Thursday, November 19th**

Read: Amanda Hess, “[Why Women Aren’t Welcome on the Internet](http://www.psmag.com/health-and-behavior/women-arent-welcome-internet-72170).” *Pacific Standard*, January 2014. **{BB}** Anita Sarkeesian, “[One Week of Harassment on Twitter](http://femfreq.tumblr.com/post/109319269825/one-week-of-harassment-on-twitter).” *Feminist Frequency*, January 20th, 2015. **{BB}**

**Presentations: #gamergate, UVA**

**Due 11/20 at 9 a.m.: Position Paper #2**

**Week 14: Thanksgiving**

**No class Tuesday, November 24rd and Thursday, November 26th**

**Week 15: The Ubiquitous City**

**Tuesday, December 1st**

**Read:** Pamela Lacalzi O’Connor: “Korea’s High-Tech Utopia, Where Everything is Observed.” *New York Times*, October 5th, 2005 **{BB}**; Selections from Adam Greenfield’s *Everyware: The Rise of Ubiquitous Computing*. **{BB};** Jean-Gabriel Ganascia, “The Generalized Sousveillance Society.” Social Science Information (2010): 489-507**. {BB}.**

**Thursday, December 3rd**

**Semester Wrap; Spillover Presentations**

**Due: Research Sequence Part 3**

**Tuesday, December 8th**

**Final Exam**

**Important Notes:**

\*Enrolling in this course constitutes acceptance of these policies. I reserve the right to alter scheduling on the syllabus and will give advance notice to students of any changes.