

PSC 315: The Internet, Technology, and Politics

DePaul University

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Class: Tuesdays 2:40-4:10
Room: Arts & Letters Hall, Room 109

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Course Wiki (Google Doc): link under course info on D2L
Course Twitter Hashtag: #PSC315

WELCOME TO THE INTERNET, TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICS:

Throughout this course we will explore the evolving set of dynamic relationships that reside at the intersection of the internet and politics. As you can imagine the major topics covered in this course are moving targets. The speed and uses of the internet itself are changing constantly, along with the ways in which it affects our lives, and the impact that it has on political communication, campaigning, and organizing.

This course will be divided into three sections. First, we will explore what the internet was, what it is, and the fundamental connection that it has with politics. Next, we will evaluate how the internet and new communication technology affect politics and how political actors are using and modifying these tools for their purposes. Finally, we will look to the future and discuss some important issues that will be addressed over the next few years: namely regulation of the internet, evolving technology, disinformation, and the debate over internet freedom. Throughout this course, one ongoing theme will be the way in which the internet and new communication technology change the relationship that the public has with the government or politics in general. Throughout this course we must be aware of the fact that there is nearly unlimited political information online, some of it good and some not so good. Therefore, we will work to develop skills that will help all of us effectively and efficiently gather, evaluate, forward, and create political content online, skills that we will call political internet literacy. Regardless of your political leanings you will leave this class with a greater ability to use the internet for your political goals. We will also work to understand what it is like to create and conduct a web-based political campaign through an experiential project that will weave itself through the course.

This is a hybrid course taking place both online and in person. As a result we will be meeting for only one 90-minute class session each Tuesday (except for today's intro meeting). This class is "flipped," meaning that the majority of the course content will be delivered online through the course d2L site. On the site you will find nearly everything needed for the course including video lectures, course readings, course videos, and various assessments that you will use to help you understand, contextualize, and apply course content. Our time in class will be primarily devoted to presentations, discussions, and various interactive activities related to that week's topic and our experiential project. The online section of the course is divided into modules, which generally correspond with a week's worth of work. It is important to pay attention to each week's workload and to take advantage of lighter work weeks. Although we will be meeting in person for only 90 minutes per week this will be a highly interactive course and we will all be communicating constantly both in person and online.

NO REQUIRED TEXT:

1. Handouts and scanned documents (available through d2L or occasionally handed out or e-mailed to class)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this quarter all students should be able to:

1. Connect the historical evolution of mass media and communication technology to the uses, importance, and regulation of the internet today.
2. Describe the structure of the internet and how this structure affects political actors, public policy, and citizens.
3. Evaluate how political actors and organizations use online tools toward their political and policy goals.
4. Analyze how changes in technology are affecting society and politics today
5. Evaluate important political options impacting technology in the future.
6. Effectively and efficiently gather, interpret, and create political content online by developing political internet literacy skills.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

1. **Attendance and Participation:** Complete the required online portions of the course including readings, video lectures and discussion boards. For our in class meetings, arrive on time to class and turn off all cell phones, and any other electronic devices that make noise or are generally rude to use during a class. Be ready to actively discuss the readings and topics for the class. Quality participation also includes thorough

note taking, active listening, and asking thoughtful questions. Our classroom meetings are going to be highly interactive so active participation is expected.

2. **Academic Integrity:** Avoid Plagiarism – representing another's work as your own. Plagiarism is a very serious offense and will result in a grade of zero for the assignment and possibly an F for the course. For more on plagiarism, and how to avoid it see the plagiarism tutorial at <http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php>
3. **Internet Use and Competencies:** This is a hybrid course so I expect you will be actively engaged online each week. Our d2L site will be the launching pad for our online experience. This is where you will find course readings, video lectures, videos related to the course, important links, your course syllabus, weekly quizzes, our weekly discussion board, and announcements for the course. In addition we have a course wiki (google doc) and will be using Twitter occasionally to discuss course content and develop skills. You should check out the course wiki and sign up for Twitter as soon as possible (if you haven't already). In order to be successful in this course I expect that you have the skills to navigate our d2L site and the internet efficiently and effectively. In the name of transparency, I want you to know I am able to see what you have been working on and how long you have been working on them on our d2L site.
4. **Reading:** You should complete all of the required readings before the date when they are listed in the syllabus. Our course will move quickly and our class time will often use the readings as a point of departure. The reading load varies each week and will usually include several hours of reading per week. Please plan ahead and take advantage of lighter reading weeks by reading ahead on upcoming topics.

GRADING

Your grade will be based on the following factors:

1. **Class Attendance, Participation, and Office Visit - 10%:** Class participation is based on active engagement during class including discussions, note taking, and thoughtful questioning. In addition, each student must visit me during office hours at some point between week 2 and week 8 (week ending 11/1). This is worth 5% of your grade. These meetings will help me get to know more about you, help you be as successful as possible, and to find out how to best direct the course. This is especially helpful in our class format when we only meet for 15 hours in person all quarter. More than two times coming to class late or being absent are grounds for the lowering of the final grade, unless accompanied by an excused absence with documentation via the Office of the Dean of Students. Although the internet will be used regularly during class, it is to be used for course related work only. Any class time devoted to internet activities not connected to the course will result in a lower participation grade.
2. **Weekly Discussion Board - 10%:** Each week I will post an article, video clip, or discussion topic on the course discussion board on d2l. You are expected to read the discussion prompt and connected material each week and add your personal comments, thoughts, and critical analysis. In order to receive full credit for a discussion board post, each of your comments should be a thoughtful reflection relevant to the week's discussion topic, no more than 1/2 page in length (approx. 1 long paragraph or two short paragraphs), and must be posted before the discussion board closes at 8:00pm Monday night. Though these are not long entries, and do not require outside research, they should be well thought out. NOTE: Each student is expected to write 8 discussion posts entries throughout the quarter, but you must read the discussion board posts and comments each week. All students should read the discussion board sometime between Monday night and class on Tuesday. Keep in mind that your responses will be read by all of your classmates so proofread carefully. Try to respond directly to your classmates as much as possible in the discussion board.
3. **Weekly Assessments - 10%:** Each course module includes weekly assessments, which fall into two categories. First, you will have ungraded self-assessments that will help you quickly review course content as you encounter it each week. These self-assessments are short and ungraded. However you will need to complete them before you can take the weekly review quiz. The weekly review quiz is the second type of assessment each week. You will take one brief multiple choice review quiz based on readings, video lectures, and other course content contained in each module. You can take this quiz at any time during the week once you complete all of the week's self assessments. You will have one opportunity to take this brief timed quiz.
4. **Three Reading Reflection Papers - 10% (3.33% each):** You will turn in three short reading reflections during the quarter: (10/1, 10/22, and 11/12). NOTE: each reflection should summarize and reflect on only four readings that you found particularly interesting, challenging, or thought provoking during each third

of the course. You are not expected to reflect on every reading. Each reading reflection should be NO MORE than two pages (approx. 1/2 page per reading) and can be single-spaced. These reading reflections should include a brief summary of the main idea of the readings and your thoughts about them. What do you think the main idea was? What do you agree or disagree with? How does it relate to larger themes of the course? What questions or feelings did it provoke? Please underline any references to readings in your reflections. Sample reading reflections are available on d2L if you need further guidance. Your reading reflections are due BEFORE the class in which they are assigned. Please turn them in digitally through our d2L site submissions folder. Also note you will be able to use these while taking your final. *Pro tip: writing these reflections directly after you read something that is particular thought-provoking will be easier and take less time than waiting until they are due to look back and summarize readings. It is strongly suggested that you write a quick 3-4 sentence summary of ALL reading of the quarter after you read them as these can help you on the final as well.*

5. **Class Presentation/wiki post – 5%:** On the first week of class you will choose one class in which you will make a presentation to the class. You will have a choice of two types of presentations that you can give: a current political news story, or a demonstration of a tool/skill to help improve our political internet literacy. Following your presentation you must post to the class wiki (google doc) a summary of the key points of your presentation (see below). Each presentation will last approximately 6-8 minutes (2-4 minute presentation followed by class discussion). Feel free to bring in any visuals if they are essential to your presentation. Important takeaways from the presentations may be included in the final exam.

Option 1: You can choose to present an important current news story related to the intersection of politics and the internet and/or technology. This intersection is broad and can include anything connected with politics during the current networked age. If you have questions about specific news stories please ask if they are appropriate. You should select a news story or event that is current (occurring within the last two weeks) and is personally interesting. If you choose a current events news presentation you will be expected to: 1) summarize your news story, 2) explain why it is important in the context of U.S. politics and the internet/technology, 3) lead the class in a brief discussion of your new story by asking two thought provoking questions and framing the event within our course content, and 4) post a one paragraph summary to the course wiki (google doc).

Option 2: You can provide a demonstration designed to introduce or clarify a web-based tool or skill that will increase our political internet literacy. This should be something that you believe will be new to at least half of the class. If you choose a political internet literacy presentation you will be expect to: 1) explain why this skill is useful in gathering, interpreting, sharing, evaluating, or creating political content online, 2) demonstrate how it can be used, 3) be prepared to answer questions about your presentation, and 4) post instructions/summarize your presentation on the course wiki (google doc).

6. **Course Project/Midterm Paper – 30%:** Instead of an in-class midterm you will have a course-long experiential project in which you will design and conduct a digital political campaign/movement based on your interests. This project is designed to implement some of what we are learning in a real political context outside of our classroom. Some elements of this project will be done in small groups and others will be done individually including a research paper due in the second half of the course. Each group will create a web presence and social media strategy. Note that campaigns are not just helping someone run for office but include any political movement aimed at affecting political behavior or attitudes. Many more details will be discussed over the first weeks of the course.
7. **Final Exam – 25%:** Multiple choice, identifications, and essay question(s). All readings, and content covered in class are fair game. A review sheet and further details will be provided as we near the exam. This final exam will take place online and will be timed. You will be able to access your notes, reading reflections, and readings but will have a limited amount of time in which to do so.

GRADING SCALE

A	93 – 100	B	83 – 86	C	73 – 76	D	63 – 66
A-	90 – 92	B-	80 – 82	C-	70 – 72	D-	60 – 62
B+	87 – 89	C+	77 – 79	D+	67 – 69	F	Below

SOME GRADING TIPS

1. Start strong because working hard in the beginning of the semester reduces the stresses and workload at the end.

2. Feel free to stop by my office hours if you have any questions or concerns (besides, it's required so why not?)
3. Extra Credit – Throughout the quarter if talks and papers come up that pertain to our class material it is possible that I will notify the class and allow for extra credit assignments that will be counted toward points on the midterm or final exam. Also, you can get credit for up to 10 discussion board entries (2 beyond the required 8).
4. You are strongly encouraged to make use of the writing center to work on your writing. You can make appointments for face-to-face, written feedback, screencast, online real-time, and conversation partner appointments. For more and how to sign up for appointments see: <https://condor.depaul.edu/writing/programs-writing-center.html> The writing center is located in Schmitt Academic Center (SAC) 212 and is open Mon. – Thurs. 10 AM to 5 PM. Fri. 10 AM to 3 PM. Phone: (773) 325-4272

COURSE OUTLINE, SCHEDULE, READING ASSIGNMENTS

(All reading assignments are to be read before the class under which they are listed. For example, all readings listed under Module 1 should be read before coming to class on the second class meeting) All are required readings unless listed under the recommended subheading. Dates and assignments subject to change)

9/12 MODULE 0: Introduction

Part I: Where We Were Then and Where We Are Now

9/17 MODULE 1: The Internet Then and Now

- Jonathan Zittrain, Ch. 1, "Battle of the Boxes" and Ch. 2, "Battle of the Networks," *The Future of the Internet – And How to Stop It*, pgs 11-35, <http://futureoftheinternet.org/download>
- Stephen Crocker, "How the Internet Got Its Rules," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/07/opinion/07crocker.html>
- Tim Wu, Part V, Ch. 19, "A Surprising Wreck," and Ch. 20, "Father and Son," *The Master Switch*, pgs. 255-300.
- Ben Epstein, Ch. 2, "The Social and Technological History of Political Communication Change," in *The Only Constant is Change: Technology, Political Communication, and Innovation Over Time*, pgs. 25-48.

9/24 MODULE 2: Politics and Media in America Before and After the Internet AND Political Internet Literacy

- Media Power in Politics: Ch. 12 by Markus Prior, pgs. 153-163
- Jill LePore, "The Party Crashers," *The New Yorker*, Feb. 22, 2016, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/02/22/did-social-media-produce-the-new-populism?mc_cid=9e1bf99a8c&mc_eid=bce7e1692f
- How Americans Encounter, Recall, and Act Upon Digital News, by Amy Mitchell, Jeffrey Gottfried, Elisa Shearer and Kristine Lu, Pew Research Center
- W. James Potter, Ch. 2, "Media Literacy Approach," *Media Literacy*, pgs. 13-31.
- Will Oremus, "Who Controls Your Facebook Feed," *Slate*, Jan. 3 2016, http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/cover_story/2016/01/how_facebook_s_news_feed_algorithm_works.html
- Nate Silver, Ch. 2, "Are You Smarter than a Television Pundit," *The Signal and the Noise*, pgs. 47-73.

Recommended:

- Yochai Benkler, Chapter 6, "Political Freedom Part 1: The Trouble with Mass Media," *The Wealth of Networks*, pgs 1-23, http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/wealth_of_networks/Download_PDFs_of_the_book

10/1 MODULE 3: Democracy and the Internet: The Hope (Reflection Paper I Due)

- Nationbuilder Story Building Guide
- Clay Shirky, Ch. 6, "Collective Action and Institutional Challenges," *Here Comes Everybody*, pgs. 143-160.
- Yochai Benkler, chapter 7, "Political Freedom Part 2: Emergence of the Networked Public Sphere," *The Wealth of Networks*, pgs. 1-18, 40-41, http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/wealth_of_networks/Download_PDFs_of_the_book

Recommended:

- Clay Shirky, Ch. 7, "Faster and Faster," and Ch. 8, "Solving Social Dilemmas," *Here Comes Everybody*, pgs. 161-211.
- Lee Rainie and Aaron Smith, "Social Media and Political Engagement," Pew Internet Center, <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Political-engagement.aspx>
- Kathryn Zickuhr and Aaron Smith, "Digital Differences," Pew Internet Center, <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Digital-differences.aspx>

- Yochai Benkler, chapter 7, "Political Freedom Part 2: Emergence of the Networked Public Sphere," *The Wealth of Networks*, pgs. 18-40. (also available free here http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/wealth_of_networks/Download_PDFs_of_the_book)

10/8 **MODULE 4: Democracy and the Internet: The Critique**

- Evgeny Morozov, Introduction, Ch. 1, "The Google Doctrine," *The Net Delusion*, pgs. ix-xvii and 1-31.
- Eli Pariser, Introduction (pgs. 1-20) and Ch. 2, "The User is the Content" (pgs. 47-76), *The Filter Bubble*.
- "Political Polarization & Media Habits," Overview (pgs. 1-10) and "Section 2: Social Media, Political News, and Ideology" (pgs. 25-32). The Pew Research Center. (I recommend reading it all, however)
- Cathy O'Neil, Introduction (pgs. 1-13) and Ch. 10 The Targeted Citizen (pgs. 179-197) in *Weapons of Math Destruction*

Recommended:

- Evgeny Morozov, Ch. 4, "Sensors and Sensibilities," *The Net Delusion*, pgs. 85-112.
- Eli Pariser, Ch. 5, "The Public is Irrelevant" pgs. 137-164, *The Filter Bubble*.
- Yochai Benkler, Robert Faris and Hal Roberts, Ch. 1, "Epistemic Crisis," (pgs 3-43) and Ch. 2, "The Architecture of Our Discontent," (pgs. 45-74) *Network Propaganda*.
- Consent of the Networked: Ch. 10, "Facebookistan and Googledom," pgs. 149-165.

Part II: The Impact of the Internet on Politics, and Vice Versa

10/15 **MODULE 5: The Internet and Campaigning**

- Ch. 16 by Rachel Gibson, pgs. 203 - 213
- Aaron Smith and Maeve Duggan, "The State of the 2012 Election - Mobile Politics," Pew Internet Center, <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Election-2012-Mobile.aspx>
- Steven Nawara and Mandi Bates Bailey, Chapter 4: "The Twitter Election: Analyzing Candidate Use of Social Media in the 2016 Presidential Campaign," in *The Internet and the 2016 Presidential Election*, pgs 79 - 108.
- Daniel Kreiss, Ch 1: "Party Networks and Political Innovation," in *Prototype Politics*
- Daniel Kreiss and Shannon McGregor, "Technology Firms Shape Political Communication: The Work of Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter, and Google With Campaigns During the 2016 U.S. Presidential Cycle," *Political Communication*, 2017.

Recommended:

- Aaron Smith, "The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008," Pew Internet Center, <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/6--The-Internets-Role-in-Campaign-2008.aspx>
- Lee Rainie, "Social Media and Voting," Pew Internet Center, <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Social-Vote-2012.aspx>
- Aaron Smith and Maeve Duggan, "Online Political Videos and the Campaign 2012," Pew Internet Center, <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Election-2012-Video.aspx>

10/22 **MODULE 6: Political Organizations and Political Movements at the Speed of the Internet (Reflection Paper II Due)**

- Beth Kanter and Allison Fine, Chapters 1-2, *The Networked NonProfit*, pgs. 1-22.
- David Karpf, Ch. 2, "The MoveOn Effect," *The MoveOn Effect*, pgs. 22-51.
- Jonathan Rauch, "How the Tea Party Organizes Without Leaders," *National Journal*, September 11, 2010, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-bloggers/2591379/posts>
- David Karpf, Ch 2, "Understanding Analytics, Algorithms and Big Data," *Analytic Activism*, pgs. 27-48 (pgs 48-58 recommended)
- Malcolm Gladwell, "Small Change: Why the Revolution will not be Tweeted," *The New Yorker*, October 4, 2010, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-3>
- "Our Demand is Simple: Stop Killing Us," Jay Caspian Kang in the *New York Times Magazine*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/10/magazine/our-demand-is-simple-stop-killing-us.html>

Recommended:

- David Karpf, Ch. 4, "Online Tools for Offline Action, Neo-Federated Political Associations," *The MoveOn Effect*, pgs. 77-101.
- Micah L. Sifry, "#OWS: A Leaderfull Movement in Leaderless Times," <http://techpresident.com/blog-entry/occupywallstreet-leaderfull-movement-leaderless-time>

10/29 **MODULE 7: Governing via the Web/Open Government**

- Ch. 36 by Helen Z. Margetts, pgs. 431 - 441
- Tim O'Reilly, "Government as a Platform," Ch. 2, *Open Government*, http://opfs.oreilly.com/titles/9780596804350/defining_government_2_0_lessons_learned_.html

- Micah L. Sifry, "A See-Through Society: How the Web is Opening Up Our Democracy," Columbia Journalism Review, January-February 2009, www.cjr.org/feature/a_seethrough_society.php
- Aaron Smith, "Government Online," Pew Internet Center, <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Government-Online.aspx>
- Lawrence Lessig, "Against Transparency," The New Republic, October 9, 2009, www.tnr.com/print/article/books-and-arts/against-transparency
- Renzo Downey, "Sec. Chao Announces Council on Emerging Transportation," Austin American-Statesman. March 13, 2019. <https://www.govtech.com/fs/transportation/Sec-Chao-Announces-Council-on-Emerging-Transportation.html>

Part III: A Look to the Future

11/5 **MODULE 8: Net Neutrality and the Regulation of the Internet**

- Rebecca MacKinnon, Consent of the Networked: Ch. 8, "Corporate Censorship," pgs. 115-130.
- Ch. 31 by Irene Wu, pgs. 369 – 380
- Tim Wu, Ch. 21, "The Separations Principle," The Master Switch, pgs. 299-319.
- Katherine Maher, "The New Westphalian Web," Foreign Policy, February 25, 2013. http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/02/25/the-new-westphalian-web/#.US1Fb2xvOHo.email?wp_login_redirect=0
- Klint Finley, "The WIRED Guide to Net Neutrality", WIRED, May 9, 2018. <https://www.wired.com/story/guide-net-neutrality/?mbid=amp-story>
- Tony Romm, "Facebook, Google face off against a formidable new foe: State attorneys general," Washington Post, September 8, 2019. <https://beta.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/09/08/facebook-google-face-off-against-formidable-new-foe-state-attorneys-general/>
- Karissa Bell, "How Zuckerberg Thinks Facebook Should be Regulated, a Brief Guide", Mashable, March 30, 2019. <https://mashable.com/article/mark-zuckerberg-op-ed-facebook-regulation/#Vbn95sHSsgqF>
- Matt Laslo, "The Fight Over Section 230 – and the Internet as We Know It", Wired, August 12, 2019. <https://www.wired.com/story/fight-over-section-230-internet-as-we-know-it/>

11/12 **MODULE 9: The Internet Freedom Debate (Reflection Paper III Due)**

- Rebecca MacKinnon, Consent of the Networked: Ch. 1, "Consent and Sovereignty," pgs. 3-14.
- Rebecca MacKinnon, Consent of the Networked: Ch. 5, "Eroding Accountability," pgs. 75-86.
- Rebecca MacKinnon, Consent of the Networked: Ch. 12, "In Search of "Internet Freedom" Policy," pgs. 187-202.
- "NSA Files: Decoded: What the revelations mean for you," The Guardian, November 3, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/interactive/2013/nov/01/snowden-nsa-files-surveillance-revelations-decoded#section/1>
- David Streitfeld, Natasha Singer, Steven Erlanger, "How Calls for Privacy May Upend Business for Facebook and Google", The New York Times, March 24, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/24/technology/google-facebook-data-privacy.html>

Recommended:

- Evgeny Morozov, Ch. 8, "Open Networks, Narrow Minds: Cultural Contradictions of Internet Freedom," The Net Delusion, pgs. 218-244 (pgs. 205-217 recommended).
- Rebecca MacKinnon, Consent of the Networked: Ch. 2, "Rise of the Digital Commons," pgs. 15-28.
- Rebecca MacKinnon, Consent of the Networked: Ch. 3, "Networked Authoritarianism," pgs. 31-50.
- Evgeny Morozov, Ch. 9, "Internet Freedoms and Their Consequences," The Net Delusion, pgs. 245-274.
- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "Remarks on Internet Freedom," January 21, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/135519.htm>
- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "Internet Rights and Wrongs: Choices & Challenges in a Networked World," February 15, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/02/156619.htm>
- Cory Doctorow, "We Need a Serious Critique of Net Activism," The Guardian, January 25, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2011/jan/25/net-activism-delusion>

11/19 **Group Presentations followed by optional final exam review session**