

**POLS 329: Seminar on American Politics
POLITICS, THE INTERNET & CHANGE**

Fall 2010

Dr. Graber

The Internet is changing politics. Citizens, politicians, interest groups all are communicating and organizing in new ways. In this seminar, we will explore the importance of digital media in contemporary politics. Our primary focus will be on the impact of the Internet on the distribution of political power and on the quality of American democracy. We will weigh the clashing arguments of the 'experts' when they discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using the new communication tools. This is a 'writing-in-the-discipline' course that stresses analysis and writing skills. Therefore, your progress will be judged exclusively by the quality of your papers and contributions to discussions. There will be no written exams.

Please buy the following four books:

1. Hendricks, John Allen & Denton, Robert E., Communicator-in-Chief, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010.
2. Hindman, Matthew, The Myth of Digital Democracy, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
3. Sunstein, Cass, republic.com / Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
4. Zittrain, Jonathan, The Future of the Internet, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008.

Several assignments listed on the time table draw on information from other sources. There may be a few additions to that list.

PAPERS

Research and writing in political science generally involves three steps: developing one or more interesting hypotheses, gathering evidence that the hypothesis is totally or partially correct or false, and presenting conclusions drawn from the research project. To sharpen your skills in hypothesis development, data collection and analysis, and clear writing, this seminar requires that you prepare three brief (5-8 pages) papers covering major topics discussed during the previous four weeks.

Each paper should: (1) Discuss aspects of the readings that are most significant for 'Politics, the Internet and Change.' (2) Critique how well the author presents and documents arguments; (3) Formulate testable hypotheses for further study of the topic.

The first paper, covering Topics 2-4 is due September 21st. A revised version is due by October 5th. The second paper, covering topics 6-9 is due on October 26th. This paper will be critiqued by a classmate whose critique is due November 2nd. A revised version of the 2nd paper is due November 9th. The third paper, covering topics 11-14 is due on November 30th. Paper grades will be based on the most recent version of each essay. There will be a grade-point penalty for late submissions.

Papers count for 75 percent of your grade. The remaining 25 percent of your grade is based on class attendance and the quality of your participation in class discussions.

TENTATIVE TIME TABLE

Due Date

- 8-24 1. Opening discussion. Course goals. Research and writing in political science.
Read: Sunstein 1, 2
Review writing skills e.g. guides by Kate L. Turabian or Diane E. Schmidt, or William Strunk, Jr. & E. B. White
- 8-31 2. Is fragmentation undermining American democracy?
Read: Sunstein 3, 4, 5
- 9-7 3. Guarding freedom of expression: policies & proposals.
Read: Sunstein 6, 7, 8, 9
- 9-14 4. Mass media and the growth of the networked public sphere
Read: Yochai Benkler, The Wealth of Networks, 6, 7
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/wealth_of_networks/index.php?title
or www.benkler.org/Benkler_Wealth_Of_Networks.pdf
- 9-21 5. First paper due. Student presentations and discussions of the first set of papers. first
Post a one-page summary of your paper on Blackboard.
- 9-28 6. New opportunities for participating, sharing and searching.
Read: Hindman 1, 2, 3, 4
- 10-5 7. The problems of digital divides and elite domination.
Read: Hindman 5, 6, 7
Submit: Revision of first paper.
- 10-12 8. Creating networks of friendly voters.
Read: Hendricks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- 10-19 9. The new campaigning tools: E-mail, YouTube, Video Games etc.
Read: Hendricks 6, 7, 8, 9
- 10-26 10. Second paper due. Student presentations and discussions of second set of papers.
Post a one-page summary of your paper on Blackboard.
- 11-2 11. Cybersecurity issues.
Read: Zittrain 1, 2, 3;
J.D. Lasica, Identity in the Age of Cloud Computing.
http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/Identity_in_the_Age_of_Cloud_Computing.pdf

- 11-9 12. Changes in the technology ecosystem.
Read: Zittrain 4, 5, 6
Submit: Revision of second paper.
- 11-16 13. The struggle to preserve openness in an anarchic world.
Read: Zittrain 7, 8, 9
- 11-23 14. Protest movements inside and beyond U.S. borders.
Read: Bennett [Bennett-SocMvtsBeyondBorders-dellaPorta&Tarrow-TransProtest&GlobalActivism-Rowman&Littlefield-2004_ch9.pdf](#)
Bennett [Bennett-Communicating Global Activism-ICS-2003.pdf](#)
- 11-30 15. Third paper due. Student presentations and discussions of the third set of papers.
Post a one-page summary of your paper on Blackboard.

Instructor's office : 1110 BSB; Phone: 996-3108. Office hours before class and by appointment. Email for messages, NOT papers. dgraber@uic.edu