

JOURNALIST'S RESOURCE

Knowledge-based reporting

Digital media and society syllabus: Covering social media, technology and a networked world

This course is organized around the broad question of what journalists should know about the way digital media are reshaping society. To answer this question, it provides a series of foundational readings on the effects of new media on a number of domains of social life, including culture, the economy, privacy, law, politics, social movements and journalism. It is designed to provide journalists covering any of these domains with the knowledge to analyze the development of technology and its continuing impact. Many journalism courses emphasize the craft of new media — the tools and tactics for effective newsgathering, storytelling, engagement, presentation and dissemination — but here we step back and seek to illuminate its social-science dimensions.

Learning objectives

This course introduces journalists to a diverse set of readings about digital media's impact on social life, and provides a set of exercises designed to help journalists apply the conceptual frameworks and empirical findings discussed in the course to real world events and contexts.

At the end of this course, students will:

- Understand how research data, theory and academic frameworks can inform richer, deeper reporting on issues of technology and society.
- Know the relevant literature in several domains of study relating to new media and society.
- Have a detailed understanding of several research streams.
- Understand how to read research journal articles and books.
- Know how to find relevant academic literature on topics related to new media and society.
- Have a set of skills for writing short, theoretically informed pieces that apply the research literature to real world events and concerns.

Design

To acquaint students with the many domains of digital-media research, this course is broken into 13 sections: media, culture and society; the public sphere; legal contexts of new media and Internet governance; privacy; collective action; activism and social movements; United States institutional politics; journalism; information; youth culture; networked social structure; digital economics; and finally Big Data and the future of computation. There are also weekly writing assignments and a final class assignment.

Assignments

Readings

This syllabus has a number of article-length texts relating to class topics; these are required readings. To keep minimize costs, we provide open-access links when possible, and nearly all the articles can be obtained through university libraries. For greater depth, there are recommended book-length works listed with each week's units. One comprehensive, free ebook that can help guide course discussion and activities around these topics is [Searchlights and Sunglasses: Field Notes from the Digital Age of Journalism](#), by Eric Newton of the Knight Foundation. Finally, at the back of this syllabus is a list of essential books as well as a larger list of foundational books and articles.

Weekly writing assignments

Throughout the course you are responsible for writing a regular blog post related to each week's theme. There are specific topics posted, but students can modify them pending approval of the instructor. Posts should provide theoretically informed analysis, interpretation, or original reporting/research about the issues discussed. Your task is to go beyond descriptive daily journalism (what happened) to become more analytical (why and with what consequence). The strongest posts will connect with the readings in the class and academic literature, and have some topical angle that frames the post.

For example, if you decide to write about how conversations on social media took shape around the Boston Marathon bombings during the unit on journalism, you should search for and summarize the academic literature that addresses what we know analytically and empirically about social media and the interactions between professionals and non-professionals in the public sphere. Your work is expected to be part of the wider discussion taking place online and should link to and engage with writings on other blogs. You are free to write using your own voice (i.e., write in the style of an editorial columnist or news analyst), but you should maintain the rigor expected of professional journalistic analysis.

Final project

Students will produce a short five- to eight-page final paper and deliver a five- to ten-minute presentation on a topic related to digital media and society. The paper and presentation should be organized as a more in-depth literature review of scholarly work on your topic. For example, if you choose "Big Data and reporting," your task is to summarize research on the topic, its politics and how it has been used, as well as the norms, practices and values of the press. The strongest papers and presentations will advance an original argument. In the example above, what have scholars not asked about the relationship between Big Data and journalism? Why should we value journalists making more routine use of data in their reporting and what are the institutional, training, or practice barriers to them doing so?

Weekly schedule and exercises (13-week course)

The assumption of this syllabus is that the course will meet twice a week. It is also assumed that students will have completed at least one basic reporting class before taking this course.

Week 1: Media, culture and society

The effects of the Internet and digital media on society have been debated over the last 20 years. This week takes as its starting point new media defined broadly as networked computing and digital technologies, and considers the relationship between technology and society and the origins of the contemporary information age.

Class 1: New media, culture and society

Readings:

- Langdon Winner, [“Do Artifacts Have Politics?”](#) *Daedalus*, 1980, Vol. 109, No. 1, 121-136.
- Yochai Benkler, Helen Nissenbaum, [“Commons-Based Peer Production and Virtue.”](#) *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 2006.
- Fred Turner, [“Burning Man at Google: A Cultural Infrastructure for New Media Production.”](#) *New Media & Society*, April 2009.
- Supplemental reading: Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 2008.

Class 2: Origins and structures of the networked age

Readings:

- Keenan May, Peter Newcomb, [“How the Web Was Won,”](#) *Vanity Fair*, 2008.
- Batya Friedman, Helen Nissenbaum. [“Bias in Computer Systems.”](#) *ACM Transactions on Information Systems*, 1996, Vol. 14, No. 3, 330-47.
- [“What Is Web 2.0?”](#) Tim O’Reilly, 2005.
- Supplemental reading: Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2005.

Assignment:

Write a substantial blog post about the origins and transformation of digital culture. Pick several contemporary topics/areas where the tensions between old and new are evident — where you can see friction between the logic of traditional pre-Web cultural conventions and that of the current digital realm.

Week 2: The public sphere

One of the most studied areas of the effects of digital media on society comes in the context of the public sphere, where debates about its nature and changing shape have been ongoing for almost 30 years. This week focuses on works that provide a set of theoretical and empirical arguments about the consequences of changing technologies on public life and democratic expression more broadly.

Class 1: Framing the debate about the public sphere

Readings:

- Diana Mutz, [“Cross-cutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice,”](#) *American Political Science Review*, 2002.
- Daniel Kreiss, [“Acting in the Public Sphere: The 2008 Obama Campaign’s Strategic Use of New Media to Shape Narratives of the Presidential Race,”](#) *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change*, 2012.
- Supplemental readings: Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, 2006; Matthew Hindman, *The Myth of Digital Democracy*, 2008.

Class 2: Networked media, information and democratic discussion

Readings:

- Markus Prior, [“Media and Political Polarization,”](#) *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2013.
- Eli Pariser, [“The Filter Bubble, or How Personalization Is Changing the Web,”](#) TED Talks, 2011 (video).
- Jonathan Stray, [“Are We Stuck in Filter Bubbles? Here are Five Potential Paths Out,”](#) Nieman Journalism Lab, 2012.
- Rebecca MacKinnon, [“The Innocence of YouTube,”](#) *Foreign Policy*, 2012.
- Supplemental readings: Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble*, 2012; Markus Prior, *Post-Broadcast Democracy*, 2007; Rebecca MacKinnon, *The Consent of the Networked*, 2013.

Assignment:

Review two studies posted at Journalist’s Resource: [“Ideological Segregation Online and Offline”](#) and [“Political Polarization on Twitter.”](#) In a blog post, analyze discourse around a particular news topic, area or forum on the Web where you see the dynamics of online polarization playing out.

Week 3: Legal contexts of digital media and Internet governance

Digital media are shaped not only by organizing bodies, legal codes and government regulations, but also social norms. This week explores the different aspects of Internet governance and how they impact its shape and structure.

Class 1: Legal Codes, intellectual property and challenges to the system

Readings:

- James Boyle, [“Why Intellectual Property?”](#) *The Public Domain*, 2008, Chapter 1.
- Lawrence Lessig, [“In Defense of Piracy,”](#) *Wall Street Journal*, 2008.
- Gabriella Coleman, [“Code Is Speech: Legal Tinkering, Expertise and Protest among Free and Open Source Software Developers,”](#) *Cultural Anthropology*, 2009.
- Alexandre Mateus, John Peha, [“Quantifying Global Transfers of Copyrighted Content Using BitTorrent,”](#) Telecommunications Policy Research Conference, 2011.
- Supplemental readings: Gabriella Coleman, *Coding Freedom*, 2012; Lawrence Lessig, *Code: Version 2.0*, 2006; Lawrence Lessig, [Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy](#), 2008.

Class 2: Internet Governance

Readings:

- James Grimmelman, [“Regulation by Software,”](#) *Yale Law Journal*, 2005.
- Jonathan Zittrain, [“The Internet Is Closing,”](#) *Newsweek*, 2008.
- Michael Joseph Gross, [“World War 3.0,”](#) *Vanity Fair*, May 2012.
- Laura DeNardis, [“Open Standards and Global Politics,”](#) *International Journal of Communications Law and Policy*, 2008-2009.
- Jack Goldsmith, Timothy Wu, [“Digital Borders: National Boundaries Have Survived in the Virtual World — and Allowed National Laws to Exert Control over the Internet,”](#) *Legal Affairs*, 2006.
- Supplemental readings: Laura DeNardis, *Protocol Politics*, 2009; Tarleton Gillespie, *Wired Shut*, 2009; Jack Goldsmith, *Who Controls the Internet?* 2008; Jonathan Zittrain, *The Future of the Internet*, 2009.

Assignment:

Review a study on Journalist's Resource, [“Quantifying Global Transfers of Copyrighted Content Using BitTorrent.”](#) Use this study to help inform a blog post analyzing the emerging problems around copyright and larger questions of regulating the Web.

Week 4: Privacy

Privacy is an important aspect of new media, and it offers a compelling case to explore the contours of the debate over the evolution of social practices, media use, technological capabilities, Internet infrastructures, and the politics of platforms.

Class 1: The law and privacy in a networked age

Readings:

- Woodrow Hartzog, Frederic Stutzman, [“The Case for Online Obscurity,”](#) *California Law Review*, 2013.
- Daniel Solove, [“The Rise of the Digital Dossier,”](#) Chapter 2 in *The Digital Person*, 2004.
- Laura Brandimarte, Alessandro Acquisti, George Loewenstein, [“Misplaced Confidences: Privacy and the Control Paradox,”](#) *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 2012.
- [“The State of Internet Privacy 2013: Research roundup,”](#) Journalist’s Resource, 2013.

Class 2: The social and technical contexts of privacy

Readings:

- Helen Nissenbaum, [“A Contextual Approach to Privacy Online,”](#) *Daedalus*, 2011, Vol. 140, No. 4, 32-48.
- Christena Nippert-Eng, [“Secrets and Secrecy,”](#) *Islands of Privacy*, 2010, Chapter 1.
- Selections from [“What They Know,”](#) series by the *Wall Street Journal*.
- Mary Madden, Amanda Lenhart, Sandra Cortesi, Urs Gasser, Maeve Duggan, Aaron Smith, [“Teens, Social Media and Privacy,”](#) Pew Research Center, Harvard Berkman Center for Internet & Society, 2013.
- Supplemental reading: Helen Nissenbaum, *Privacy in Context*, 2012.

Assignment:

Review a study posted on Journalist's Resource, [“Why Parents Help Their Children Lie to Facebook About Age: Unintended Consequences of the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act.”](#) In a blog post, analyze the relevant policy background and, given the social science data presented, the shortcomings of the current law and the merits of proposed solutions.

Week 5: Collective action online

The loss of privacy online — or at the very least the de facto making *public* of more of our behaviors — has important consequences for how we take action collectively in the networked era. This week we will explore a series of readings on the new face of collective action and changes in the types of organizations that mobilize and coordinate individuals in pursuit of shared ends.

Class 1: Organization-less organizing and the rise of new intermediaries

Readings:

- Clay Shirky, [“Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations”](#) (video), Berkman Center for Internet & Society, 2008.
- [“Research chat: David Karpf, scholar of Internet organizing and activism.”](#) Journalist’s Resource, 2012.
- [“Digital activism and organizing: Research review and reading list.”](#) Journalist’s Resource, 2013.
- Supplemental readings: Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*, 2009.

Class 2: Old organizations, new information environments

Readings:

- Bruce Bimber, Andrew Flanagin, Cynthia Stohl, [“Reconceptualizing Collective Action in the Contemporary Media Environment.”](#) *Communication Theory*, 2005.
- David Karpf, [“Online Political Mobilization from the Advocacy Group’s Perspective: Looking Beyond Clicktivism.”](#) *Policy & Internet*, 2010.
- Supplemental readings: Bruce Bimber, *Information and American Democracy*, 2003; Bruce Bimber, Andrew Flanagin, and Cynthia Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations*, 2012.

Assignment:

After reading [“Online Political Mobilization from the Advocacy Group’s Perspective,”](#) interview several digital media specialists at activist/advocacy groups and analyze those organizations’ online strategies. Your analysis should speak to larger themes about the transformation of organizing.

Week 6: Activism and social movements

The lowered cost of collective action, the new social formations this makes possible, and the implications for formal organizations have had tremendous consequences in the domain of social movements. This week looks at the new face of social movements across different institutional and national contexts.

Class 1: Networked media and social movements

Readings:

- Lance Bennett, Alexandra Segerberg, [“The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics,”](#) *Information, Communication & Society*, 2012.
- Lance Bennett, [“Communicating Global Activism: Strengths and Vulnerabilities of Networked Politics,”](#) *Information, Communication and Society*, 2003.
- Jeffrey R. Halverson, Scott W. Ruston, Angela Trethewey, [“Mediated Martyrs of the Arab Spring: New Media, Civil Religion, and Narrative in Tunisia and Egypt,”](#) *Journal of Communication*, 2013.
- Supplemental readings: Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope*, 2012; Larry Diamond, *Liberation Technology*, 2012; Philip Howard, *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, 2010; Philip Howard and Muzammil Hussain, *Democracy’s Fourth Wave?* 2013.

Class 2: Organizing activism

Readings:

- Jennifer Earl, Katrina Kimport, Greg Prieto, Carly Rush, Kimberly Reynoso, [“Changing the World One Webpage at a Time: Conceptualizing and Explaining Internet Activism,”](#) *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 2010.
- Zeynep Tufekci, Christopher Wilson, [“Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations From Tahrir Square,”](#) *Journal of Communication*, 2012.
- John Palfrey, Bruce Etling, Rob Farris, [“Political Change in the Digital Age: The Fragility and Promise of Online Organizing,”](#) Harvard Berkman Center for Internet & Society, 2010.
- Leah Lievrouw, [“Oppositional and Activist New Media: Remediation, Reconfiguration, Participation,”](#) Proceedings of the Ninth Participatory Design Conference, 2006.
- Supplemental reading: Jennifer Earl, *Digitally Enabled Social Change*, 2011; Leah Lievrouw, *Alternative and Activist New Media*, 2011.

Assignment:

Broaden the previous week's analysis of a few specific advocacy organizations and offer a look at activist media around an entire issue area — for example, human rights or climate change.

Week 7: U.S. institutional politics

From Howard Dean's groundbreaking presidential run in 2004 to Barack Obama's victory in 2008, digital media is transforming political engagement in both expected and unexpected ways.

Class 1: Campaigns in the Digital Age

Readings:

- Daniel Kreiss, "[Crowds and Collectives in Networked Electoral Politics.](#)" *Limn*, 2012.
- Henry Farrell, "[The Consequences of the Internet for Politics.](#)" *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2012.
- Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, Henry E. Brady, "[Weapon of the Strong? Participatory Inequality and the Internet.](#)" *Perspectives in Politics*, 2010.
- Lee Rainie, Aaron Smith, Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry Brady, Sidney Verba, "[Social Media and Political Engagement.](#)" Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2012.
- Sacha Issenberg, "[Why Campaign Reporters are Behind the Curve.](#)" *New York Times*, 2012.
- Supplemental reading: Daniel Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back*, 2012; Rachel Gibson, Paul Nixon, Stephan Ward (editors), *Political Parties and the Internet*, 2003.

Class 2: From campaigning to governance

Readings:

- Matthew A. Baum, Tim Groeling, "[New Media and the Polarization of American Political Discourse.](#)" *Political Communication*, 2008.
- "[Open Data Seminar](#)" posts at Crooked Timber blog, 2012. Featuring: Tom Slee, Victoria Stodden, Steven Berlin Johnson, Matthew Yglesias, Clay Shirky, Aaron Swartz, Henry Farrell Beth Noveck, Tom Lee.
- Supplemental readings: Gavin Newsom, Lisa Dickey, *Citizenville: How to Take the Town Square Digital and Reinvent Government*, 2013; Beth Noveck, *Wiki Government*, 2010.

Assignment:

Choose one of the studies highlighted on the Journalist's Resource article, "[Effects of the Internet on politics.](#)" In a blog post, use the study as a framework for evaluating the dynamics around an issue currently in the news spotlight, or a particular political campaign or cause.

Week 8: Journalism

While campaign organizations and political offices have undergone significant changes over the past 20 years, they've persisted institutionally. Journalism, however, has undergone rapid and profound shifts. This week looks at some of the shifts in new media and journalism from a host of different cultural, organizational, social and economic perspectives.

Class 1: News and its problems

Readings:

- ["The State of the News Media 2013,"](#) Pew Research Center, Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2013.
- Jay Rosen, ["Why Political Coverage Is Broken,"](#) Jay Rosen's Press Think, 2011.
- Robert McChesney, ["Farewell to Journalism? Time for a Rethinking,"](#) *Journalism Practice*, 2011.
- Nicco Mele, ["Big News,"](#) *The End of Big: How the Internet Makes David the New Goliath*, 2013, Chapter 2.
- Clayton M. Christensen, David Skok, James Allworth, ["Breaking News,"](#) Nieman Reports, Fall 2012.
- Supplemental readings: C.W. Anderson, *Rebuilding the News*, 2013; Pablo Boczkowski, *Digitizing the News*, 2005 and *News at Work*, 2010.

Class 2: The digital dynamics of the news media

Readings:

- Sarah Sobieraj, Jeffrey M. Berry, ["From Incivility to Outrage: Political Discourse in Blogs, Talk Radio and Cable News,"](#) *Political Communication*, 2011.
- Jodi Enda, ["Campaign Coverage in the Time of Twitter,"](#) *American Journalism Review*, 2011.
- Alexis Gelber, ["Digital Divas: Women, Politics and the Social Network,"](#) Joan Shorenstein Center, Harvard Kennedy School, Spring 2011.
- Supplemental readings: Andrew Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System*, 2013; David Tewksbury, Jason Rittenberg, *News on the Internet*, 2012; Shanto Iyengar, Jennifer A, McGrady, *Media Politics: A Citizen's Guide*, 2011.

Assignment:

Review the findings of the study ["That's Not the Way It Is: How User-Generated Comments on the News Affect Perceived Media Bias,"](#) posted at Journalist's Resource. Write a blog post about the tension between promoting audience engagement and participation and some of the traditional practices and goals of institutional journalism.

Week 9: The politics of information

The politics of information is broader than journalism and extends to governmental information and the platforms for producing, consuming and disseminating information. This week we consider the politics of information historically, and focus on the case of Wikileaks.

Class 1: A history of information

Readings:

- James Gleick, [“The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood.”](#) *New York Times*, 2011, excerpt.
- Michael Schudson, [“Political Observatories, Databases and News in the Emerging Ecology of Public Information.”](#) *Daedalus*, 2011.
- Supplemental readings: James Beniger, *The Control Revolution*, 1989; James Gleick, *The Information: A History, A Theory, A Flood*, 2012.

Class 2: A case study of WikiLeaks

Readings:

- Yochai Benkler, [“A Free Irresponsible Press: WikiLeaks and the Battle Over the Soul of the Fourth Estate.”](#) Forthcoming, *Harvard Civil Liberties-Civil Rights Law Review*.
- Micah Sifry, [“Wikileaks, Assange and Why There’s No Turning Back.”](#) Huffington Post, 2011.
- Clay Shirky, [Richard S. Salant Lecture on Freedom of the Press](#), Harvard Shorenstein Center, 2011.
- Supplemental reading: Charlie Beckett and James Ball, *WikiLeaks: News in the Networked Era*, 2012.

Assignment:

Choose a current controversy that involves the leaking of information to the public through digital means. In a blog post, analyze the issue and link it to the broader discussion about how our “information society” has evolved and the challenges we are likely to face in the future.

Week 10: Digital youth culture

Nowhere is the debate about the effects of new media on society richer than around consideration of the youth who are shaping social movements, civic and political participation and how information and cultural products are produced and consumed. This week explores demographic shifts and changes in media practice in greater detail.

Class 1: Networked social life

Readings:

- danah boyd, [“Why Youth \(Heart\) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life,”](#) Berkman Center for Internet & Society, 2008.
- Lynn Clark, [“Digital Media and the Generation Gap,”](#) *Information, Communication & Society*, 2009.
- Matt Richtel, [“Wasting Time Is New Divide in Digital Era,”](#) *The New York Times*, 2012.
- Mary Madden, Amanda Lenhart, Maeve Duggan, Sandra Cortesi, Urs Gasser, [“Teens and Technology 2013,”](#) Pew Research Center, Harvard Berkman Center for Internet & Society, 2013.
- Supplemental readings: Mizuko Ito, Heather A. Horst, Matteo Bittanti, danah boyd, *Living and Learning with New Media*, 2009; Mary L. Gray, *Out in the Country*, 2009; Lynn Clark, *The Parent App*, 2012.

Class 2: Digital natives

Readings:

- Urs Gasser, Sandra Cortesi, Momin Malik, Ashley Lee, [“Youth and Digital Media: From Credibility to Information Quality,”](#) Harvard Berkman Center for Internet & Society, 2012.
- Joseph Kahne, Jessica Timpany Feezell, Namjin Lee, [“Digital Media Literacy Education and Online Civic and Political Participation”](#) MacArthur Foundation Youth and Participatory Politics project, 2010.
- Matt Richtel, [“Growing Up Digital, Wired for Distraction,”](#) *New York Times*, 2010.
- Joel Stein, [“Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation,”](#) *Time*, 2013.
- Supplemental readings: John Palfrey, Urs Gasser, *Born Digital*, 2010; Nancy Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, 2010; Mizuko Ito, Heather Horst, Judd Antin, Megan Finn, *Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out*, 2013.

Assignment:

Interview a dozen young people about their digital lives. Choose a theme for your questions such as bullying, distractedness, digital divides, information seeking or credibility. In a blog post, review your findings and put them into conversation with the wider research literature.

Week 11: Networked sociality and the research world

The digital generation is driving many changes in society, but a number of scholars see a much broader process of social and cultural change. This week's readings explore more general shifts in social media and social life. We also examine related findings of social scientists.

Class 1: Structures of Social Life

Readings:

- Sherry Turkle, [“The Flight from Conversation.”](#) *New York Times*, 2012.
- Stephen Marche, [“Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?”](#) *The Atlantic*, 2012.
- Ronald W. Berkowsky, [“When You Just Cannot Get Away.”](#) *Information, Communication & Society*, 2013.
- Supplemental readings: Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, *Networked: The New Social Operating System*, 2012; Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together*, 2012; Mizuko Ito, Misa Matsuda and Daisuke Okabe, *Personal, Portable, and Pedestrian: Mobile Phones in Japanese Life*, 2005.

Class 2: Facebook, Twitter and Social Media - Research Findings

Readings:

- Michal Kosinska, David Stillwell, Thore Graepelb, [“Private Traits and Attributes Are Predictable from Digital Records of Human Behavior.”](#) *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, 2013.
- Amy Mitchell, Paul Hitlin, [“Twitter Reaction to Events Often at Odds with Overall Public Opinion.”](#) Pew Research Center, 2013.
- John Wihbey, [“Questioning the Network: The Year in Social Media Research, 2012.”](#) Nieman Journalism Lab, 2012.
- Itai Himelboim, Stephen McCreery, Marc Smith. [“Birds of a Feather Tweet Together: Integrating Network and Content Analyses to Examine Cross-Ideology Exposure on Twitter.”](#) *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 2013.
- [“Deen Freelon of American University: Research chat on digital scholarship.”](#) Journalist's Resource, 2013.

Assignment:

After reading [“Twitter Reaction to Events Often at Odds with Overall Public Opinion.”](#) find a thread, topic or hashtag on Twitter in which there appears to be dominant opinions or trends. In a blog post, analyze those trends, look at broader public opinions on the issue, and analyze the differences between the two based on what research has found.

Week 12: Digital economics

A central set of questions relates to the political economies of digital media and the attendant practices individuals craft around them. We consider here the economic value(s) of the key infrastructure providers of networked technologies, the commercial models of emerging platforms from video games to search, and the impact that new media has had on other industries such as the financial sector.

Class 1: Framing the Debate

Readings:

- Yochai Benkler. [“Sharing Nicely: On Shareable Goods and the Emergence of Sharing as a Modality of Economic Production.”](#) *Yale Law Journal*, 2004.
- Yochai Benkler, [“Freedom in the Commons: Towards a Political Economy of Information,”](#) *Duke Law Journal*, 2003.
- Brian X. Chen, [“One on One: Susan Crawford, Author of *Captive Audience*,”](#) New York Times’s “Bits” blog, 2013.
- Supplemental readings: Susan Crawford, *Captive Audience: Captive Audience: The Telecom Industry and Monopoly Power in the New Gilded Age*, 2013; Henry Jenkins. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, 2008; Robert McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism Is Turning the Internet Against Democracy*, 2013.

Class 2: Economic models of platforms

Readings:

- Gina Neff, David Stark, [“Permanently Beta: Responsive Organization in the Internet Era,”](#) *Society Online*, 2004, Chapter 11.
- Hector Postigo, [“From Pong to Planet Quake: Post-Industrial Transitions from Leisure to Work,”](#) *Information, Communication & Society*, 2003.
- Joseph Turow, [“Audience Construction and Culture Production: Marketing Surveillance in the Digital Age,”](#) *The Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science*, 2005.
- Supplemental readings: Edward Castronova, *Synthetic Worlds: The Business and Culture of Online Games*, 2006; Siva Vaidhyanathan, *The Googleization of Everything (and Why We Should Worry)*, 2011.

Assignment:

Review the study [“Mobile News: A Review and Model of Journalism in an Age of Mobile Media,”](#) posted at Journalist’s Resource. In a blog post, evaluate the digital business strategy of a particular news organization. Touch on some of the broader theoretical questions about digital commerce.

Week 13: Big Data and the future of computation

This week concludes the course more speculatively with consideration of the emergence of Big Data and the future of computation more broadly. We will discuss the possibilities, and limits, of data, as well as its inherent political aspects.

Class 1: Big data and its politics

Readings:

- Kate Crawford, danah boyd, [“Critical Questions for Big Data: Provocations for a cultural, Technological and Scholarly Phenomenon,”](#) *Information, Communication & Society*, 2012.
- David Weinberger, [“The Machine that Would Predict the Future,”](#) *Scientific American*, 2011.
- Chris Anderson, [“The End of Theory: Will the Data Deluge Make the Scientific Method Obsolete?”](#) *Wired*, June 2008.
- Janna Anderson, Lee Rainie, [“The Future of Big Data,”](#) Pew Internet & American Life Project, July 2012.
- [“What Is Big Data? Research roundup,”](#) Journalist’s Resource, 2013.
- Supplemental readings: Kenneth Cukier, Viktor Mayer-Schonberger, *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think*, 2013; Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*, 2013.

Class 2: Big Data in political contexts

Readings:

- Robert M. Bond, et al., [“A 61-Million-Person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization,”](#) *Nature*, 2012.
- Stephen Ansolabehere, Eitan Hersh, [“Validation: What Big Data Reveal About Survey Misreporting and the Real Electorate,”](#) *Political Analysis*, 2012.
- Brant Houston, [“Big Data in Need of Analytic Rigor by Journalists,”](#) Global Investigative Journalism Network, 2013.
- Supplemental readings: Sasha Issenberg, *The Victory Lab*, 2012; Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail — but Some Don't*, 2012.

Assignment:

Review [“A 61-Million-Person Experiment in Social Influence and Political Mobilization”](#) posted at Journalist’s Resource. In a blog post, analyze the study's results and discuss how the intersection of social media and Big Data could shape the future of society. What are the potential problems? What are the benefits? What might the future look like?

Readings

Essential books

The following are book-length works that speak to core issues touched on in this syllabus. Many are recent works that take the latest digital dynamics into account.

- Eric Newton, [*Searchlights and Sunglasses: Field Notes from the Digital Age of Journalism*](#). Knight Foundation, 2013.
- C.W. Anderson, *Rebuilding the News*. Temple University Press, 2013.
- Bruce Bimber, Andrew Flanagin, Cynthia Stohl, *Collective Action in Organizations: Interaction and Engagement in an Era of Technological Change*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Sacha Issenberg, *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*. Crown, 2012.
- Dave Karpf, *The MoveOn Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Daniel Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back: The Crafting of Networked Politics from Howard Dean to Barack Obama*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Rebecca MacKinnon. *Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle for Internet Freedom*. Basic Books, 2012.
- Robert McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. The New Press, 2000.
- Nicco Mele. *The End of Big: How the Internet Makes David the New Goliath*. St. Martin's Press, 2013.
- Evgeny Morozov, *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*. PublicAffairs, 2013.
- John Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*. Basic Books, 2008.
- Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read and How We Think*. Penguin Books, 2012.
- Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organization Without Organizations*. Penguin Press, 2008.
- Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. Basic Books, 2012.
- Jonathan Zittrain, *The Future of the Internet and How to Stop It*. Yale University Press, 2009.

Supplemental reading list

Books

- M. Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Polity, 2012.
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