

Networked Politics
Professor Damien Pfister
CBA 206
Tuesday 3:30-6:10
dpfister2@unl.edu

Office Hours Monday 1-3
Tuesday 1-3
By appointment
439 Oldfather Hall
402-472-0646

Mission of the Department of Communication Studies

The role and mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, and societies. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages. The department's research, teaching, and service devote particular attention to understanding the ways in which communication erodes and sustains collaboration within and among local, national, and global communities.

Course Summary and Objectives

This course aims to prepare you to answer the following questions: What are the dominant features of internetnetworked societies? What are the possibilities and constraints for political activity offered by the widespread dissemination of digital media? What avenues for democratic citizen participation have been opened by the self-publishing opportunities offered by the internet? How can citizens learn to craft attention-gathering messages in an age of information saturation? By blending the history, criticism, theory, and practice of networked communication, this seminar should equip participants with a critical vocabulary and a repertoire of strategies that they can draw upon in order to shape public deliberation.

Required Texts

Rettberg, Jill Walker. Blogging. Polity, 2008.

Additional readings will be made available through Blackboard and E-Reserve.

Course Requirements

Class Contribution: 25 points. Students will be expected to post five “class contributions” to the course blog during the course of the semester, each worth 5 points. Class contributions can include: links to a contemporary news story about networked technologies, a rumination on this week’s readings, links to additional materials that can help us understand course material, confessions about what in the course is keeping you up late at night, etc. The basic idea is to contribute something to our understanding of networked politics beyond the formal course readings.

Attention & Participation: 75 points. At the end of each class period, each student will fill out a participation sheet and evaluate their attention and participation on a 1-5 scale. The instructor will adjust the self-grade as necessary. Grading criteria is as follows:

0. Did not attend class.
1. Attended class and was a distraction to others.
2. Attended class but did not do the readings and did not speak and paid little attention.

3. Attended class, did the readings, but did not participate in large or small groups.
4. Attended class, did the readings, was attentive to lecture, and spoke or nonverbally participated.
5. Attended class, did the readings, was attentive to lecture, made key contributions to class discussion.

Intoxicated students will receive a 1 for the class period, no exceptions.

Group project, 100 points. Students will self-organize into groups and coordinate a “digital media intervention.” This intervention will require extensive planning and cooperation in the development and distribution of a rhetorical artifact (for example, a blog, video, podcast, etc.) on a contemporary controversy. Classroom time will be dedicated to group work, so regular attendance and participation is required. Grade breakdown will include a concept proposal (due February 2), execution, and group participation.

Final paper, 100 points. Each student will independently write a 12-15 page research paper on some issue related to networked politics. There are a few options here:

- a) Investigate a deliberative episode. Take one event where some particular digital media appeared to play some role in public deliberation and explore what happened and the implications this episode holds for democratic practice. Example: the impact of Twitter in the aftermath of the Iran elections.
- b) Critique one or more of the course reading materials. Perhaps there is a claim made in one of the course readings that you think requires some modification or extension; you may take on one of the authors and, through additional research, show how their conclusions need alteration. Example: Rettberg’s thesis on how bloggers are citizen journalists is flawed.
- c) Conduct original research. Generate a research question or hypothesis and, through either qualitative or quantitative method, share your research findings. Example: research the various uses and gratifications of Facebook through surveys.
- d) Multimedia research project. I am open to a multimedia investigation of an issue. You will need prior consultation approval from me on anything like this.

Each student will write a final paper proposal due March 9 with a preliminary bibliography of 5-7 qualified sources.

Grade Scale

100-97: A+	76-73: C
96-93: A	72-70: C-
92-90: A-	69-67: D+
89-87: B+	66-63: D
86-83: B	62-60: D-
82-80: B-	59 and below: F
79-77: C+	

Procedures

Accommodations. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Plagiarism. I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarists. The Student Code of Conduct defines plagiarism as “presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source) and submitting examinations, theses, reports, speeches, drawings, laboratory notes or other academic work in whole or in part as one's own when such work has been prepared by another person or copied from another person.” It is my responsibility to report any cases of cheating or plagiarism to the administration. All assignments must be your own original work and must be prepared specifically for this course. When in doubt, cite. Plagiarists will receive an F for the course—no exceptions.

Grievances. I will work hard for you to be fair and responsible when it comes to your grades. You will receive detailed comments on your performances. Despite my professed even-handedness, there might arise some issues concerning evaluation on an assignment. If there is an issue you must a) wait 24 hours before doing ANYTHING, b) submit to me via email an exhaustive explanation of your issue, c) schedule a meeting with me to discuss your performance. One of my pet peeves is when a student grumbles publicly about a grade or the class rather than taking the issue up privately with me. Your concerns are rarely a public matter.

Late policy. Late assignments lose one letter grade for every 24 hours it is late.

Norms

Preparation. This is not a “reading optional” class. Each student must read the reading assignments for comprehension and critical engagement—you should be able to summarize the main arguments and have a well-reasoned opinion on agreeing, disagreeing, or extending with the insights from the reading. If the conversation is slow and participation is light, I reserve the right to add reading quizzes that will be factored in to overall grades.

Decorum. I expect everyone to act as befits mature college students. An inexhaustive list of what I think that means: don't speak while others are speaking, utilize the principle of charity when responding to others' comments, don't pack up when there's five minutes left in class, don't behave uncivilly to others, don't use derogatory language, **don't text during class**. Don't come to class if you are ill. Really don't come to class if you have the swine flu. Calibrate your caffeine intake appropriately to be prepared for class.

Attention. Each student is expected to pay full attention each class period. Students with laptops must sit on the right side of the classroom with their desks slightly tilted so as not to be distractions to others.

All written assignments: 1 inch margins, 1.5 line spacing, Times New Roman, 12 point. No games.

Schedule of Readings

January 12: What's up with this course?

Introductions

January 19: Attention

Richard Lanham, "Stuff and Fluff." In *The Economics of Attention: Style and Substance in the Age of Information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. 1-41.

Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article." *New German Critique*. 1964. 49-55.

Manuel Castells, "An Introduction to the Information Age," *City*. 1997. 6-16.

January 26: The Networked Public Sphere

Jill Rettberg, Chapter 1: "What is a blog?" and Chapter 2: "From Bards to Blogs."

Yochai Benkler, "Political Freedom Part 2: Emergence of the Networked Public Sphere." In *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. 212-272.

February 2: Networked Deliberation

Lewis Friedland, Thomas Hove, and Hernando Rojas, "The Networked Public Sphere." *Javnost-The Public*, 2006. 5-26.

Andrew O'Baioll, "Weblogs and the Public Sphere." In *Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community, and the Culture of Weblogs*, eds. L.J. Gurak, S. Antonijevic, L. Johnson, C. Ratliff, & J. Reyman. 2004. http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/weblogs_and_the_public_sphere.html.

Cass Sunstein. "Four Big Problems." *Infotopia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 75-102.
Due: Group Project Concept Proposal

February 9: Collaboration

Jill Rettberg, Chapter 3: "Blogs, Communities, and Networks"

Micah Sifry, "The Rise of Open Source Politics." *The Nation*, November 4, 2004.
<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20041122/sifry>.

David Bollier, "Introduction." In *Viral Spiral: How the Commoners Built a Digital Republic of Their Own*. New York: The New Press, 2008. 1-20.

February 16: Invention

Jill Rettberg, Chapter 4: "Citizen Journalists?" & "Blogs as Narratives"

Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*. 1968. 1-14.

Richard Young, "Invention," *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*. 349-355.

Beth Simone Noveck, "Social Life of Information," *Wiki Government: How Technology Can Make Government Better, Democracy Stronger, and Citizens More Powerful*, Brookings Institution Press, 107-26.

February 23: Arrangement

Eduardo Navas, "The Three Basic Forms of Remix: A Point of Entry," *Remix Theory*, April 26, 2007, <http://remixtheory.net/?p=174>.

Richard Edwards and Chuck Tyron, "Political Video Mashups as Allegories of Citizen

Empowerment,” *First Monday*, October 2009,
<http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2617/2305>.

Anne Demo, “The Guerrilla Girls’ Comic Politics of Subversion,” *Women’s Studies in Communication*, 2000, 136-55.

March 2: Style

Richard Dawkins, “Memes: The New Replicators,” *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, <http://www.rubinghscience.org/memetics/dawkinsmemes.html>.

Aaron Lynch, “Self-sent Messages and Mass Belief,” *Thought Contagion*, Basic Books, 1998, 1-16.

Henry Jenkins, “If it Doesn’t Spread, It’s Dead: Media Viruses and Memes Part 1 & 7,” *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*,

http://www.henryjenkins.org/2009/02/if_it_doesnt_spread_its_dead_p.html &

http://henryjenkins.org/2009/02/if_it_doesnt_spread_its_dead_p_6.html.

March 9: Memory

Sherry Turkle, “Always-On/Always-On-You: The Tethered Self.” In *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies*, ed. Katz. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. 121-38.

Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin, “The Ethics of Forgetting in an Age of Pervasive Computing.” *CASA Working Papers*, 2005. <http://eprints.ucl.ac.uk/1292/1/paper92.pdf>.

Viktor Shon-Meyerberg, “Failing to Forget the Drunken Pirate,” *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age*, Princeton University Press, 2009.

Due: Final Paper Proposal

March 16: Spring Break

March 23: Delivery

James Porter, “Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric and Human-Computer Interaction,” *Genre*, Fall 2008, 1-28.

Howard Rheingold, “Mobile Media and Political Collective Action.” In *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies*, ed. James E. Katz. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008. 225-40.

Manuel Castells, Mireia Fernandez-Ardevol, Jack Qiu, Araba Sey, “The Mobile Network Society.” In *Mobile Communication and Society: A Global Perspective*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006. 245-58.

Evgeny Morozov, “Think Again: Twitter.” *Foreign Policy*. August 6, 2009.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/06/think_again_twitter.

March 30: Kairos

Kinneavy, James. “Kairos: A Neglected Concept in Classical Rhetoric.” in *Rhetoric and Praxis: The Contribution of Classical Rhetoric to Practical Reasoning*. Ed. Jean Dietz Moss.

Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1986.

Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the “Violence” of Seattle.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 2002. 125-151.

David Sheridan, Tony Michel, and Jim Ridolfo, "Kairos and New Media: Toward a Theory and Practice of Visual Activism," *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Technology*, 6.2, 2009, <http://enculturation.gmu.edu/6.2/sheridan-michel-ridolfo>.

Due: Group Projects

April 6: Decorum

Zaza Papacharissi, "Democracy Online: Civility, Politeness, and the Democratic Potential of Online Discussion Groups," *New Media and Society*, 2004, 259-83.

Theodore Windt. "The Diatribe: Last Resort for Protest." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 1972. 1-14.

Jill Rettberg, "Chapter 6: Blogging Brands"

April 13: Surveillance

Cory Doctorow, "Scroogled." <http://blogoscoped.com/archive/2007-09-17-n72.html>.

A Report on the Surveillance Society, ed. David Murakami Wood, 2006.

April 20: Sousveillance

Steve Mann, Jason Nolan, and Barry Wellman, "Sousveillance: Inventing and Using Wearable Computing Devices for Data Collection in Surveillance Environments," *Surveillance and Society*, 2003, 331-55.

Jill Rettberg, "Chapter 7: The Future of Blogging"

Due: Final Papers

April 27: Presentations

Group presentations and final discussion