Political Communication PSCI/COMM 3244

Summer 2 2000

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Course Website:

This course examines theories and examples of political communication on the Internet. We will be looking at two specific examples which are closely related. The first is the presidential elections of 1996 and 2000. The second will be the growth of citizen activism on the Internet.

In exploring these topics, we will learn theories of internet communication, methods of using the internet, and will go forth unto the internet to develop our own set of sites and spaces for political communication. In doing this, we will look at the relationships between internet media and its various audiences. To a large extent, many media theories can be applied in internet situations. However, as we will see, not every theory or situation on the internet maps onto examples in traditional media(television, radio, newspapers). We will to some degree think about the relationships between traditional media and internet media. In doing this, we will look both at the development of the internet as media, and its history in that regard and in respect to other media.

The goals of this course are to develop knowledge of:

1.   The Internet as a forum for political communication

2.   Political Campaigns on the Internet

3.   How the Internet relates to other media.

4.   Theories of Internet Communication

In addition to these goals, you should also acquire a sense of building things on the internet, the organization of the internet(to the extent that it exists), and how the internet has political and cultural implications across national borders. You should gain a sense of what the internet means in your life and its contexts.

This class has online components. It is focused on participation. Participation is 20% of the grad and is mandatory. Completing a minimum number of the assignments is also mandatory.

Assignments are worth 60-80% of your final grade. There is a final exam, to be taken at your option which is worth 20% of the grade. There will extra credit periodically, so watch for it.

This is a difficult and demanding course, but its rewards can be quite significant — if you do the work. If you either are unwilling or unable to do the work, then do not remain enrolled. This class will require that one read and reflect critically upon the theories and examples we read and look at in the class in order to discuss their political claims, social implications, and their relation to political communication. You should give yourself plenty of time to read and reflect on each individual assignment. Everyone is expected to the assigned readings on time, and in their entirety. Everyone is also expected to do additional outside work to become more informed about the internet and society in general. And, everyone is expected to participate eagerly and voluntarily in class discussions.

Books:

The Web of Politics, Richard Davis

Cyberpolitics: Citizen Activism in the Age of the Internet, Richard Hill and John Hughes

Politics on the Nets: Wiring the Political Process, Wayne Rash, Jr.

Cyberpower: The Culture and Politics of Cyberspace and the Internet, Tim Jordan

We also be using several websites in class.

Grading Policies

6 Short Essays x 5 points =   30 points

6 related assignments x 5 points   30 points

Participation =20 points

Final Exam or assignments scaled   20 points

Total Points = lOOpoints

All essays and assignments are graded on a 5 point scale. Points are given out holistically, but focus on answering the essay or completing the assignment(ask questions if you want further explanation of assignments), the style of your essay, and the logic and argumentation of your essay contribute to your overall grade to a great extent. I reserve the right to require you to rewrite any essay or to give a 0 on any assignment because of lack of care in regards to either grammar or spelling. You have the right to ask to be allowed to rewrite any assignment that is not above a 3 on the scale, unless the grade is a 0.

Important: If you miss any two weeks of class and the assignments and do not make them up, preferably before hand, you will fail the class.

Important: Good participation, defined as a 20/20 grade, is defined as posting something of high quality approximately every weekday.

When posting, be polite, try to be conversational, not overly argumentative, and demonstrate that you have read the readings, or have done other work related to the course.

To make up an assignment, you must contact the instructor before the day the assignment is due. Any other situation is negotiated. Emergencies will be recognized with proper documentation.

Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

Lecture 1: What is Political Communication: An Introduction?

Lecture 2: Where does Political Communication Occur?

Read Politics on the Net

Turn in essay on Friday.

Turn in assignment on Friday

Week 2 Media and Democracy

Lecture 1: The Media and Democracy

Lecture 2: The Internet and Democracy

Read Web of Politics to 84

Read Cyberpolitics to 75

Turn in essay on Friday

Turn in assignment on Thursday

Week 3

Lecture 1: The Presidency and Executive Office Communication

Lecture 2: Agenda Setting

Read Web of Politics to End

Read CyberPolitics to End

Turn in Essay on Friday

Turn in assignment on Thursday

Week 4

Lecture 1: Power, Persuasion and Symbolism Online

Lecture 2: Political Campaigns

Read Cyber Power to 99

Turn in essay on Friday

Turn in assignment on Thursday

Week 5

Lecture 1: The Internet and Media in 1996

Lecture 2: The Campaign of 1996

Read CyberPower to end

Turn in Essay on Friday

Turn in Assignment on Thursday

Week 6

Lecture 1: The Campaign of 2000

Lecture 2: Conclusions/wrap-up

Turn in Essay on Thursday

Turn in Assignment on Thursday

Turn in Final Exam on Friday