Department of Political Science

PL3104: Media, Data and Politics

Course outline

Term 1, 2020-21

Course Lecturer and Seminar Tutor:
Neville Chi Hang Li, P.hD.
chihangli@ln.edu.hk
Part I

Course Title: Media, Data and Politics

Course Code: POL3104

Recommended Study: Year 3 and 4

No. of Credits/Term: 3

Mode of Tuition: Lecture and Tutorial

Class Contact Hours: 3 hours per week

Category: Elective course

Discipline: Political Science

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Co-requisite(s): N/A

Exclusion(s): N/A

Exemption Requirement(s): N/A
Part II

Brief Course Description

This course investigates the complex relationship between politics, media and data in modern society. We will explore how old media (newspaper, TV, radio, etc), new media (social media and Internet-based media) and the “big data” shape the global and local political landscape. Students are expected to learn about the role of different media in the political process, with a particular focus on how new media transforms such process - the rise of cyber propaganda, the use and abuse of social media, the fake news phenomenon and the impact of censorship and surveillance. We will combine classroom learning with real-life practices and expert sharing, such that students can learn about both the theoretical and practical aspects of how old and new media impacts politics.

Aims

To learn about how media and data constitutes and shapes our everyday political life; to become data-savvy in an increasingly digital world.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the role of different forms of media in politics as well as the growing importance (and pitfalls) of “big data” in daily lives.
2. Describe how states use media and data to exert power in different regime contexts.
3. Explain how ordinary citizens around the world empower themselves through social media.
4. Perform basic research and analysis on social media data.

Indicative Content

1. Mass media in politics
2. Polling and public opinion
3. Political advertising in election campaigns
4. Fake news and cyber propaganda
5. Social media and political participation
6. Social media and popular protests
7. Social media and big data
8. Internet censorship and digital surveillance

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Participation and Performance in Lectures and Tutorials
Students are encouraged to think critically and express their thoughts in class. The level and quality of participation and performance will be assessed through responses to presentations, direct observation, worksheets, etc., as appropriate (LO1, LO2, LO3).

Tutorial presentation
Each group, normally comprising 2 to 3 members, will deliver one presentation on a topic proposed by the members and approved by instructors. The presentation will normally last 25 minutes, plus Q&A of 5 to 10 minutes. (LO1, LO4)

Essay
Each student will submit a mini-research essay of around 2000 words. (LO1, LO4)

Final Exam
Final exam will evaluate student’s knowledge and mastering of the course content. The exam may consist of different question formats such as multiple-choice questions, short questions, or essays (LO1, LO2, LO3).

Assessment

Final examination -- 30%
Continuous assessment -- 70%

  • Essay 30%
  • Presentation 20%
  • Participation 20%
Part III

Lecture Schedule and Outline

Thursday, 3:30 pm to 5:20 pm (Real-time online teaching)

Week 1  Introduction: Media-Politics Relationship     10 September
Week 2  Three (Western) Models of Media and Politics    17 September
Week 3  Election Polls: Data Analysis and Interpretation  24 September
Week 4  Political Advertisement and Media Creditability  Reschedule needed
Week 5  The Era of Fake News, Post-Truth and Fact-checking  8 October
Week 6  Older, Newer and Hybrid Media: The Transition    15 October
Week 7  Technology, Social Media and Political Participation 22 October
Week 8  Tribal Epistemology: Effective (Digital) Communication?  29 October
Week 9  Political Mobilization, Social Movement and the Internet  5 November
Week 10 Protest Logic, Practice and Organization in the Digital Era  12 November
Week 11 Algorithm, Big Data and Social Media  Reschedule needed
Week 12 Censorship, Digital Surveillance and Data Security   26 November
Week 13 The Future of Media and Politics     3 December

Reading

In the list which follows, we have identified core and additional readings for each lecture. All students are expected to read the core text, while the additional readings are for the students who are interested in specific topics or case studies. Apart from the weekly readings, the following textbooks are recommended:

Comparing Media Systems among Liberal Democracies:
Older, Newer and Hybrid Media


Fake News and the Post-truth Era:


Election Polling and Analysis


Social Movement, Protest Logic, Practice and Organization


Lecture 1 Introduction: Media-Politics Relationship

Core:

Lecture 2 Three (Western) Models of Media and Politics

Core:

Additional:


Lecture 3 Election Polls: Data Analysis and Interpretation

Core:
Additional:


**Lecture 4 Political Advertisement and Media Creditability**

Core:


Additional:


Lecture 5 The Era of Fake News, Post-Truth and Fact-checking

Core:

Additional:

Lecture 6 Older, Newer and Hybrid Media: The Transition

Core:

Additional:


**Lecture 7 Technology, Social Media and Political Participation**

*Core:*


*Additional:*


Lecture 8 Tribal Epistemology: Effective (Digital) Communication?

Core:

Additional:


Lecture 9 Political Mobilization, Social Movement and the Internet

Core:

Additional:


Lecture 10 Protest Logic, Practice and Organization in Digital Era

Core:


Additional:


Lecture 11 Algorithm, Big Data and Social Media

Core:

Additional:


Lecture 12 Censorship, Digital Surveillance and Data Security

Core:
Additional:


**Lecture 13 The Future of Media and Politics**

Core:


Additional:


Important Notes:

(1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.

(2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.

(3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.

(4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on https://pla.ln.edu.hk/.
# Assessment Rubrics

## Class Attendance and Participation (20%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent A, A-</th>
<th>Good B+, B-</th>
<th>Fair C+, C-</th>
<th>Pass - Failure D+, D, F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation (10%)</td>
<td>Participates regularly and enthusiastically</td>
<td>Participates occasionally</td>
<td>Participates only when asked by the instructor</td>
<td>Participation is nil or almost nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression (10%)</td>
<td>Expression of ideas or opinions is consistently factually accurate, logical and clear</td>
<td>Expression of ideas or opinions is generally factually accurate, logical and clear. Lapses were rare and minor in nature</td>
<td>Expression of ideas or opinions is generally factually accurate, logical and clear, but with a number of minor lapses</td>
<td>Ideas or opinions are not expressed logically, and are characterized by significant factual inaccuracies and lack of clarity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Group Presentation and discussion (20%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent A, A-</th>
<th>Good B+, B, B-</th>
<th>Fair C+, C, C-</th>
<th>Pass – Failure D+, D, F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization (3%)</strong></td>
<td>Students presents information in logical, interesting sequence which can be followed</td>
<td>Students present information in logical sequence which I can follow</td>
<td>Difficulty following presentation because students jump around</td>
<td>Cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject Knowledge (5%)</strong></td>
<td>Students demonstrates full knowledge by answering all questions with explanations and elaboration</td>
<td>Students are at ease answering questions, but fail to elaborate</td>
<td>Students are uncomfortable with information and are able to answer only rudimentary questions</td>
<td>Students do not have grasp of information; students cannot answer questions about subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graphics (2%)</strong></td>
<td>Students' graphics explain and reinforce screen text and presentation</td>
<td>Students' graphics relate to text and presentation</td>
<td>Students occasionally uses graphics that do not support text and presentation</td>
<td>Students use superfluous graphics or no graphics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content (5%)</strong></td>
<td>Presentation has no misspellings or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Presentation has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Presentation has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Student's presentation has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Articulation (5%)</strong></td>
<td>Students' uses clear voices and correct, precise pronunciation of terms.</td>
<td>Students' voices are generally clear. Student pronounces most words correctly.</td>
<td>Students' voices are generally too low. Students incorrectly pronounce a number of terms.</td>
<td>Students mumble, incorrectly pronounce many terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Excellent A,A-</td>
<td>Good B+, B,B-</td>
<td>Fair C+, C,C-</td>
<td>Pass – Failure D+, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension of the relevant concepts (10%)</td>
<td>Demonstrates a deep insightful level of understanding</td>
<td>Demonstrates a good level of understanding</td>
<td>Demonstrates an adequate level of understanding</td>
<td>Demonstrates an inadequate level of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of concepts to the topic (10%)</td>
<td>Appropriate concepts are all applied correctly, to provide in-depth analysis elaboration to all aspects of the topic</td>
<td>Appropriate concepts are correctly applied, to provide analysis to all important aspects of the topic</td>
<td>Appropriate concepts are, for the most part, correctly applied, to provide analysis to all important aspects of the topic</td>
<td>Concepts are not applied, or are generally applied inappropriately or incorrectly; important aspects of the topic unaddressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression (6%)</td>
<td>Expression of ideas is consistently accurate, logical and clear</td>
<td>Expression of ideas is generally accurate, logical and clear. Lapses were rare and minor in nature.</td>
<td>Expression of ideas is generally accurate, logical and clear, but with a number of minor lapses</td>
<td>Ideas are not expressed logically, and are characterized by significant inaccuracies and lack of clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of English (4%)</td>
<td>English is consistently excellent</td>
<td>English is proficient, with no major errors</td>
<td>English is of a fair standard but some errors are present</td>
<td>English is below standard, with many major errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination (30%)</td>
<td>Excellent A, A-</td>
<td>Good B+, B-</td>
<td>Fair C+, C-</td>
<td>Pass – Failure D+, D, F</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Demonstrates a deep insightful level of understanding</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of English in the Exam (4%)</strong></td>
<td>English is consistently excellent</td>
<td>English is proficient, with no major errors</td>
<td>English is of a fair standard but some errors are present</td>
<td>English is below standard, with many major errors</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark Ranges</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85 -100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-39</td>
<td>F</td>
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